ERNESTO:

A PHILOSOPHICAL ROMANCE.

BY WILLIAM SMITH, ESQ.

"Love, admiration, fear, desire, and hate;
Blind were we without these."

WORDSWORTH.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., CORNHILL.

1835.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY STEWART AND CO.
OLD BAILEY.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The following is a history of the *mind*, rather than the *fortunes* of an individual: the characters it presents us with, are more frequently viewed from their intellectual than their moral aspect: and an abstract principle of philosophy occupies the place of that ethical precept, or maxim of life, which the novel more generally conveys, and exemplifies. On this last account, and on no other, does it assume the title of a "Philosophical Romance."

What that principle of philosophy is, will best be gathered from the narrative itself: we content ourselves, here, with referring to the motto on the title-page.

To illustrate historical truth is no portion of our design. The path of our biography conducts us lightly over the public transactions of the times; and the persons, with whom it brings us acquainted, are not such as exhibit, in their modes of thought, those minor peculiarities which characterise an age. There are even some discrepancies of chronology, which we have made no attempt to reconcile: it is evident, that a series of events is comprised in our narrative within a shorter period than it occupies in the pages ... -torian.

We publish this volume with diffidence of its merit, and with little concern for its success.—This last we proclaim in no sullen mood. In truth, we recognise in ourselves (and we have published before,* and had trying experience) little of that parental attachment which authors are supposed to entertain for their mental offspring. The work once written, our pleasure in it is over—our interest is gone, and we can leave it to its fate without farther solicitude.—But on these personal feelings, it were better to be silent. We would rather, like a sturdy chapman, commend our wares to the public. And certainly we have one claim upon its attention—brevity. We have always endeavoured to express ourselves in words as few and distinct as the occasion would admit. If we cannot boast of having enforced any moral sentiment, or taught any applicable truth, we have aimed throughout at exciting the *reflection* of the reader,—an excitement which, in our estimation, is not the least pleasurable that literature affords, and which can hardly be enjoyed without some accompanying profit.

---

* "GUIDONE," a DRAMATIC POEM, and "SOLITUDE," a POEM.

We are not altogether so *unnatural* an author, as not to desire an opportunity of relieving the first of these poems from some instances of harshness and obscurity, which a too hasty publication, and a negligent revisal of the press, have occasioned. We should then feel that it [illegible] t fairly on its trial.

CONTENTS.

BOOK I.

THE YOUNG PHILOSOPHER.

BOOK II.

THE MORALIST.

BOOK III.

THE DEVOTEE.

BOOK IV.

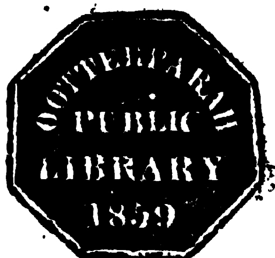
THE CONSPIRATOR.

BOOK I.

THE YOUNG PHILOSOPHER.

"It is a trick of this same family
To analyse their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will
Dangerous secrets; for it tempts our powers,
Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
Into the depth of darkest purposes."

THE CENCI.



ERNESTO.

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE AND RESIDENCE OF ERNESTO.

Ernesto Adorno, the hero of our tale, was an inhabitant of Rome during the sixteenth century under the pontificate of Leo X., and his immediate successors. He was a youth of noble lineage,—in the enjoyment of great hereditary wealth,—not unaccomplished in those martial and chivalrous exercises which still formed in those days a prominent part of the education of a gentleman,—but more especially devoted to letters and philosophy.

The Count Adorno, his father and only surviving parent, was a Genoese nobleman, the representative by birth of that powerful family of the Adorni, whose members had frequently ruled with arbitrary sway over the conquered liberties of their country. Much to the surprise of all who had calculated on the boldness and energy of his early character, the Count had withdrawn from a city, which, considering the number of petty states into which Italy was divided, offered no contemptible object of ambition, and whose little princedom had been brought still nearer within his reach by the untimely death of an elder brother. Establishing himself at Rome, he had taken command of the papal forces, but had soon after relinquished, not only this honourable appointment, but the profession altogether of arms, in which he had been eminently distinguished. He retired, at the same time, from that attractive combination of luxury and classic learning which was displayed at the court of Leo X., and for the participation of which his education and temper had apparently adapted him. On the decease of his wife, which took place a few years after his arrival at Rome, he withdrew even from the circles of private society. Entirely secluded, he now sought in books and the abstractions of a cold philosophy, a substitute for the companionship of men and the projects of life.

The palace which formed the residence of Count Adorno and his son, was a vast and sombre pile, separated from the town by a high and battlemented wall. It was a length of building formed of incongruous parts. Towards the east it terminated in a chapel built in the most ornate style of Gothic architecture; the centre was pierced by a wide open archway, which was flanked on either side by castellated turrets; while the remaining wing exhibited a more domestic and peaceful character. Here at the basement ran a succession of small elliptic arches, supported upon short and duplicated columns, which formed a piazza or cloister, that continued its course round the whole western side of the palace. Viewed from the back, the structure presented the very different and far more uniform appearance of one lofty and extensive façade, relieved only by its architectural decorations,—its double row of urns, encircled, with funereal wreaths, its dark festoons of flowers upheld by numerous cherubs, so very young, and yet so antiquated. Here the wide archway that in front presented so conspicuous an object, bore the appearance of a subterranean passage, as it issued out between the broad flights of marble steps which descended into the garden.

The garden had been originally planned and decorated with great taste a[illegible]ring cost

Its walks, adorned with vases and statues, led through pleasant shrubberies, and terminated in the grotto or the temple; its lawns were shaded by the most delicate and diversified foliage, and refreshed by innumerable fountains; its beds of flowers displayed the rarest exotics; and the loftiest trees of the forest formed a boundary to the scene. But this gay enclosure had not been preserved in its first unblemished state. One aged gardener had the sole charge of it, and the bald old man, with scythe in hand, seemed rather to personify that unrelenting Time which was stealthily destroying its artificial beauty, than to be the living son of Adam occupied in its preservation. His labours were hardly sufficient to check the verdure of the lawns, to keep the paths unobstructed, and to remove from the beds those flowers and decayed fruits, which had withered on their stalks, or fallen unnoticed from their branches. In spite of his care many of the statues were half hidden by the encroachment of their verdant niches, and many a vase was garlanded by other foliage than that which the sculptor had bestowed. Flowers of the rarest and most costly description struggled for their place with weeds native to the soil. The vine and other creeping plants, extending their tendrils undisturbed, wove tree to tree in fantastic arborage, and flung their purple fruits or their fragile blos-

soms in grotesque and prodigal confusion. One might here have gathered grapes from thorns, and plucked the ripe fig from off the thistle.

Count Adorno occupied an apartment in the western wing of the palace, which gave access to the piazza—his customary promenade; and excepting this, and a chamber, selected by the studious Ernesto, the spacious edifice bore the aspect of being entirely abandoned. A stranger would have thought it untenanted. The paved court which lay in front never rang with the hoofs of trampling steeds, or with the armed heel of the dismounted cavalier; its tilt-yard never witnessed the gay combats of chivalry: its chapel, gloomy and gorgeous with its painted windows, was a stranger to the anthem or the prayer; and its rooms of social magnificence, with their sumptuous hangings and gilded furniture, were left to darkness and to silence. Amidst the neglected parterres of the garden, no laughter-loving groups of ladies with their knights were ever seen,—were ever heard—to walk; and the graceful form of woman never paused upon those hanging terraces and marble stairs which conducted back to the desolate mansion. The huge, inanimate vases which stood on either side served only to mark out more distinctly the vacant and deserted space between them.

In this palace, and in this garden, sate or wandered the young and meditative Ernesto. His slight figure was usually attired in a black cloak of the simplest form, cast most negligently upon his shoulders. His countenance, which was of a mould somewhat, perhaps, too delicate for manly beauty, was already marked by lines of thought; and his dark eye, though capable of being animated by every variety of emotion, returned incessantly to its museful and contemplative expression. Continuous and intense reflection had imposed an aspect of extreme serenity upon Ernesto, but the spirit within was secretly struggling with the subtle web of thought which had enmeshed and entangled it. Under the same uniform and habitual appearance of the external man more than one entire revolution of mental character had already passed concealed. The listlessness and tone of indifference which were now observable in his demeanour and conversation, resulted from no original want of susceptibility, but from exhausted excitement and the weariness of ineffectual, perplexed, unceasing meditation;—the lot of one, whose intellectual faculty had been controlled by no ruling passion, and made subservient to no active or ambitious purpose. It is the history of such a mind, quick with feeling, but restricted within itself by obstinate habits of

thought, that we are desirous of presenting to our readers.

"He sate alone
On stormy waters, in a little boat
That held but him, and would contain no more."

CHAPTER II.

THE STORY OF THE IDIOT.

Ernesto, walking in his garden, overheard the sound of a lyre, and knew that it could proceed from no one but his friend Cynthio,—a youth unendowed with the gifts of fortune, unless a cultivated mind, equally versed in the studies of poetry and philosophy, be reckoned amongst her benefactions. It was noon, and Cynthio was seated beneath the shadow of a tree that hung its boughs over one of those fountains with which the garden was every where refreshed and adorned. The lyre in his hand, but still more the quick yet meditative expression of his eye, betrayed his poetic character. Uniting the skill and accomplishment of the improvisatore with the severer studies of his art, he had touched the strings of his instrument, and in these unpremeditated verses was giving expression to

that feeling of doubt and hesitation which so often steals on the mind of the young aspirant for fame.

1.

Ye viewless airs, that round me play
  With murmur faint, that seems to hide
A voice articulate,—oh! say,
  Do ye my aspirations chide?
Say, ere I stain with sallow hue
  My wasted cheek, and lose my youth,
And the sweet pleasures, short and few,
  Of dawning life,—oh! say ye sooth!
Is this my task?—is mine to be
  The poet's immortality?

2.

Say! for it was your mystic song,
  Heard high amidst the leafy boughs,
That first withdrew me from the throng,
  To take the minstrel's pensive vows.
Alas! the wind but greets my ear
  With the same murmur half suppressed:
It nothing reeks of hope or fear—
  It sighs not from a human breast—
It frames no lay to sweeten care,—
  It knows no want—it heeds no prayer!

Ernesto seated himself beside the poet, who, on the arrival of his friend, shook off the mood of despondency which had for a moment overcome

him. The open countenance of the bard, his manly person and bearing, his frank, courteous, and cheerful demeanour, were not, perhaps, what a stranger would have pictured to himself, upon listening only to the somewhat melancholy effusion that we have recorded. His features lit up with no reserved or partial animation as he welcomed Ernesto, and the conversation between them, on his part especially, was sustained in a gay and enthusiastic style.

There was an inmate of the palace whom we have not yet mentioned. This was no other than a tall and sombre idiot, who was allowed to wander, whithersoever he pleased, amidst its desolate chambers, and neglected pleasure-grounds. As the two friends sat conversing together, his strange figure, with huge, pallid visage, and straight, black hair, streaming half way down its back, stalked leisurely before them. It gazed for a while upon the two companions with that expression of vacant, sullen, torpid melancholy, which is sometimes observable on the countenance of the larger animals of the brute creation, and then walked slowly away.

What could have brought so singular a creature into that abode, was an inquiry which Cynthio had been tempted to make on a former occasion, but which his friend had appeared to avoid. The

same question now involuntarily broke from his lips, and Ernesto, with a slight embarrassment, replied that the mystery was so connected with certain eccentricities of his own, that to explain it would entail upon him a long confession of his past thoughts and follies,—a confession, he added, which he had no other repugnance to make to his friend, than what arose from the tedium which such a narrative must necessarily inflict upon the hearer, and the disgust which he himself felt on recurring to any by-gone and abandoned condition of his own mind.

Cynthio, on his part, protested that no species of history was to him more attractive or curious than such as related to the intellectual character.

"Remember," said Ernesto, "that you have brought this trial of patience on yourself. Lie down, therefore, with resignation upon the green-sward, and I, your most faithful historian, will proceed in all due formality with my narrative.

"Know then, Cynthio, that I have not always been the cold and indifferent being with whom you are so unfortunate as to have made acquaintance. I was once the passionate misanthrope, the contemner of life, the lofty despiser of mankind, and of myself, also, as one of the weak, blind, and miserable race! How this sublime asceticism came upon me I will explain as nearly as I am able.

"Living with my father, and in this habitation, it need hardly be told you that I entered on the season of youth and made my first efforts of reflection under circumstances of no exhilarating influence. Not that I ever shared the absolute seclusion of the Count, but my thoughts were saddened and my spirits imperceptibly depressed by the desolate scene which surrounded me, and the cold associate with whom I resided. I believe that in youth we seldom resist the first accessions of melancholy. My martial exercises were neglected; I confined myself to literature; I sought out the poetry of affliction; I became a voluptuary of sorrow. My thoughts moved under the burden of others' despondency. One who had not yet known the agitations of hope, was languishing in the fictitious gloom of disappointment; one whose journey had hardly commenced, had fallen with sense of weariness to the earth.

"I will not blame the muse," he said, looking with a smile towards his friend, the poet. "This gentle and fanciful despair demands from us no very painful sympathy. As it is ushered in by those exquisite and decorated complaints, which the muse in every age and country has delighted to pour forth; so is it sufficiently solaced by those same images of beauty, and sentiments of tenderness, by which the poet graced his affliction, and won

an entrance for his grief. Very tolerable are the distresses gathered from song, and melody, and sculptured forms of imperishable loveliness. The mournful Muse instructs our youth in whatever is fair, and excellent, and amiable in life, though these are heard of in the strains of lamentation;—she reports of new happiness even while she bewails it as transitory, or reproaches it as fallacious;—she performs the offices of hope in the language of regret, and betrays the choicest treasures of existence while seen as if in act of bearing them away. To the imagination of her pupil the world lies revealed in beautiful disclosure, though the light falls ever from the *setting* sun."

"Oh, good defence of the melancholy muse!" said Cynthio. "But proceed—proceed."

"It generally happens that the external influences of daily scene and customary action oppose their timely resistance to this desponding humour of our early days. But in my own case, the outward scene of life was such as to foster and encourage it. The encroaching disposition became sole possessor of my mind. The ivy grew everywhere. It spread unhindered on my path—it stole unchecked upon my dwelling—it obscured the light of day, and embowered the secluded tenant in a fixed and stationary gloom. All active energies were repressed, and all kindly desires were thwarted;—a

heart, not unsusceptible of generous impulses, and naturally ebullient with emotion, was shut up in the dark chamber of its own bosom; — I could not be otherwise than miserable. The stream of thought was not only shadowed by a mock despondency, it was drugged with the bitterness of discontent.

"Darker and darker grew the tenor of my meditations. I discoloured all life, I distorted the character of man, I cultivated the wisdom of despair, and established myself on the sullen supremacy of a universal disdain. I resolved to withdraw at once from every hope, and close my heart to every affection; I sought out the fountains of pleasure only to break them up, and mingle their deceptive waters with the sand; I laboured to dismantle the fabric of happiness, and reduce it at once to the ruin I deemed it fated to become. I was very heroical in my misery. In the absence of all other passions, the hatred of life became itself a ruling passion. My infelicity was, at length, not only lamented as incurable, it was complained of as unmerited. My joyless being was resented as an injury. Those pious sentiments which maternal solicitude had once instilled were rudely discarded, and I looked towards Heaven with no other than such reluctant acquiescence, as was extorted by irresistible power, doing with us as it lists. Contempt and misanthropy tainted every

sentiment of my mind, and filled with error every reflection that I framed.

"It might be expected of one who viewed with contempt the whole circle of existence, that he would meet the trivial inconveniences of his own retired life with perfect equanimity. But in this moody condition of my soul, every trifling disgust, every casual vexation, though disregarded of themselves, could summon up a dismal train of violent and afflictive meditations. The first disturbance—the first ripple on the surface—soon indeed subsided, but the shock was given to enchanted waters, and it roused the gloomy and tempestuous genius that lay scarce slumbering beneath them. Every puny incident was master of my peace; every slight annoyance seemed to place a dagger in my hand, whose point was turned towards myself. The momentary irritation, unnoticed, or soon forgotten, could hurry me, again and again, through the same horrid monotony of thought, to the same desperate and reiterated conclusion,—that the repose denied to life was to be sought for in death!

"And all this was passing in the mind of one who, to the few who knew him, bore the aspect and character of an amiable and enviable youth!—of one who, with all his hatred to man, neglected none of the courtesies of life, and with all his contempt of virtue, infringed on none of the precepts

of rectitude! I scowled at the human race, but my intercourse with every individual of it was marked with urbanity and kindness. It was a very temperate and very honourable youth who gave, or thought he gave, his most profound respect to the wisdom of the voluptuary,—his most earnest sympathy to the artifices of the selfish. It was from the social circle to the hilarity of which I had, perhaps, conspicuously contributed, that I retired, gentle cynic as I was, to utter my disgust of existence! The bitterness of my heart was jealously preserved to myself. I could not tolerate the contradiction of others, and had no care for their assent. There can be no partnership, indeed, with the misanthrope. He shrinks from community in a sentiment which is weakened by participation; and never sincerely desires an acquiescence in opinions, the pride of which is gone when they are acknowledged to be just.

CHAPTER III.

THE STORY OF THE IDIOT CONTINUED.

"My misanthropy injured no one but its owner. But you, Cynthio, who have studied all moods and passions of the mind, will not need to be told how much misery the angry and exasperated spirit can inflict upon itself! nor will you be surprised to hear, that in this unhappy condition I actually determined upon escaping all the calamities of life by withdrawing from life itself.

"When from a sudden and passionate resolve, this grew to be a settled and final purpose, it is wonderful how serene and equable I became. I mingled in society with still better cheer and more alacrity of mind; for though in haste to quit the world, I was not unwilling to be remembered in it with regret. I was unusually munificent, for there was no possession I should long require; I was

patient, for there was no evil I should long endure; I was social, for no intimacy could now be formed which I should have an opportunity of repenting. On leaving home to put in execution this my very conclusive project, I bade 'farewell' with a bland and cheerful countenance;—laying, however, as I well remember, a slight and unobserved emphasis on that word of parting, whose full meaning, in the present instance, was known only to myself."

"But how was this wild design to be executed? What was the proposed manner of your suicide?"

"You shall hear, Cynthio,—you shall hear. I turned my horse's head towards the Alps. I was led on by the beauty of the scenery — for with nature I had no quarrel to maintain,—till I reached the lake of Lucerne in Switzerland. Mountains, deprived indeed of verdure, but rising in every variety of majestic form, nearly encircle the beautiful waters of that lake, which sleeps on so securely amidst the gigantic guardians of its slumber. There was a mystic repose in the scene, which rivetted my imagination, and detained my steps. The only companionship I had sought, during my excursion, was that of an idiot, who wandered about this neighbourhood, unowned by any of its inhabitants, but provided for by the general charity, or the general superstition. His lofty and melancholy figure might be met stalking

over the summits of the mountains, or cowering in their caverns. In my supreme wisdom I was pleased with contemplating a creature, expressly sent, it seemed, for the humiliation of a man. It grinned at me, and I, in sardonic temper, returned its laugh :—which, at that moment, was the greatest idiot of the two, I pretend not to decide.

" Of all our raptures, that which is excited by the sublimity of nature, is the least capable of continuance. Despondency soon returned, and the moment approached when the purpose of my expedition was to be fulfilled. In my excursions about the neighbourhood of the little town of Lucerne I had discovered a mountain-path, leading up from an opposite quarter of the lake, which, at one part of its steep and winding ascent turned upon the edge of a tremendous precipice. This looked down into an obscure and rocky chasm,—occasioned, perhaps, by some violent disruption of the mountain,—to the bottom of which the eye could scarcely penetrate. From this precipice was I to plunge, here was to be my final rest,—remote, as I flattered myself, from the multitude of men, and the despised solemnities of religion. It was not probable that any immediate search for me would be made : at some future period a few whitened bones might perchance attract curiosity, or reward pursuit.

" The sun was already setting as I lay reclined

beneath the sail which bore me, for no happy purpose, across the calm and radiant surface of the lake. Gently along the base of lofty mountains, and silent as its own shadow in the glassy water, the little boat moved on, and the figure within it might have presented to the eye of any chance beholder, an enviable picture of meditative repose. But what, indeed, you will be curious to ask, were the feelings of the voyager? The act of self-destruction had been so frequently resolved, that I felt as if, in some manner, pledged to its performance. I could not have retreated from my purpose without stamping inanity and falsehood on all my previous meditations, and reiterated assertions. It had been the conclusion of all my reasonings, it had accompanied all my cherished sentiments, and to forego it, was to abandon the whole character of my being. At this last hour I entered on my project, as one no longer voluntary. It seemed that I was floating through this scene of tranquil splendours,—whose beauty was not unfelt,—to a fore-doomed and inevitable destiny. Surrounded by the very pomp of happiness, and laid in the recumbency of peace, I was secretly conscious of being borne, as with soft but irresistible impulse, to the place of my hideous immolation. It was languor proceeding on the path of desperation.

"The boat touched the shore, and stepping from it, I commenced my toilsome ascent. At first I drew myself up slowly, and paused frequently, overcome with stupor. Suddenly I might have been seen to urge my speed with insane impatience. My feet tore the earth; my breast was level with the hill; with one hand I caught at roots of trees, or the tangled grass; with the other I plunged my staff into the ground, grasping it as if I would mash it in my palm. No effort I could make was capable of exhausting, or sufficient to gratify that paroxysm of energy, which, like a possessing demon, was tossing my slight and wavering figure up the acclivity of the mountain. It was night when I stood upon the fatal eminence. The sky, of which it commanded an uninterrupted view, was without a cloud, and the brilliant darkness glittered with its innumerable stars. I stood bordering on that immensity of space, whose vastness is such, that it converts its many thousand luminaries into an adornment only of a boundless and perpetual night. Elevated, a solitary and breathing creature, into this silent and interminable region, there fell upon me a momentary awe;—but the season of reflection was passed, and I turned towards the chasm which lay in solid blackness at my feet.

"My step had approached to the utmost edge of

the precipice, when the muttering of voices seemed to ascend from the abyss beneath me. I shrunk back with sudden alarm. But the sound, if sound there was, soon ceased. All was silent, as it had been; it was a topic for scorn, that I, even for a moment, should have been subjected to fear,—I, whose design upon myself was of so ungentle a nature! As this scoffing reflection passed through my mind, I laughed aloud:—the laughter of another mingled with the echoes of my own. Peal after peal of loud and discordant merriment now burst from that hideous chasm, and was reverberated by all the surrounding hills. I stood motionless and aghast. Had I already reached the limits of the material world?—was death, too, I reasoned, like all our other hopes, a cheat?—and who were these that gave their frightful welcome to some new scene of sorrow and of madness? The laughter was renewed, as the sole answer to these my questioning thoughts. And now, I myself was joining in it with a kind of demoniac frenzy, when there rose before me, writhing upwards from the abyss, a gigantic figure, grinning, and eying me with orbs of supernatural magnitude. This strange visitant having extricated itself from its horrid and mysterious lair, approached towards me with wild and ungovernable gestures.

"It was the idiot, who had been crouching on a

ledge of rock beneath the projecting precipice. He advanced upon me, still continuing that laughter which, on his part, had been merely a mechanical imitation, and which the echoes of the place had strangely multiplied. What passion is there, be it ever so violent and headstrong, that the presence of a madman or a lunatic would not tame and reduce to subjection? As I stood beside this irrational creature, the tumult and anarchy of my mind subsided. The rolling of the idiot's eye had fixed my own. The unmeaning laughter, and senseless gesticulations of the maniac, recalled me to self-possession. I ran to the fortress of my own reason. I was calm, and my suicidal purpose fell like a strangled serpent, a dead, disgustful object, at my feet. The fever of discontent had reached its height, and was passing from me: already did I find it difficult to believe that I had been conducted to the brink of that precipice by feelings of so vague and impalpable a nature. I now attended my inane companion down the mountain-path. The hut of a Swiss shepherd afforded to both of us a shelter for the residue of the night.

"When the ensuing morning broke upon me, I felt as if awaking from other dreams than those which slumber had produced. My long meditated project being abandoned, I entered, for a second time, into the living and breathing world.

Something of grateful, something even of friendly feeling, was entertained towards my unconscious preserver. The condition of the idiot was such as human kindness could hardly improve; but I determined at least that the animal nature of man, in which alone he partook, should in him be enjoyed to the utmost. He should dwell for the remainder of his days within this spacious residence, and wander unexposed to danger in the enclosed grounds which surround it. Accordingly I brought him home, and here you behold him.

"Such is the history of the idiot, or rather of my own misanthropy. In passing through the city, my companion was so terrified with the unusual sounds and novel apparitions it presented to him, that, having once entered the walls of this quiet residence, he was far from seeking to escape, and would have trembled to repass the gates. His mind is quite infantine, and his temper harmless. That redundancy, sometimes observable in his gestures, is the result only of incapacity to govern limbs, which have grown upon him, so to speak, faster than he could learn how to control them. He rarely breaks his torpid silence. When he does, it is the mimic cry of some wild beast, or his rude imitation of the laughter of man, that wakes the echoes of the palace, and falls on my startled recollections. I was careful, at first, to lodge

him at a distance from the count, my father, but, to my surprise, the abstract philosopher took a sudden interest in this new inmate of the establishment. Having transferred him to an apartment contiguous to his own, he endeavoured, by caresses and indulgences, to attach the creature to himself. I assure you, he is quite jealous of his friend. The dull and hideous monster has become dear, I suspect, to the solitary man."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAN WHO RESOLVES TO BE HAPPY.

"On the mysterious presence of the idiot," said Cynthio, "you have quite satisfied me; but another curiosity has been excited, and I wish to hear what followed next in the history of your mind."

"I bounded," said Ernesto, "from one extreme to the other. Since life was to be continued, what remained but to regard it with more cheerful sentiment? And since there was still no definite, no individual object for my passions, what resource had I but to strive with might and main to love and admire that very world,—that very human nature,—which I had sufficiently hated and despised? I resolved to be benevolent,—to be happy.

"This garden became more than ever my resort. Here I would repose beside its fountains, and to the ceaseless splashing of their waters, tune my spirit to content. Here I would stand amidst its parterres, and from beneath the shadow of its

acacias, dispend my gentle sympathies on the sportive insects and creeping things, which in this place wore out their pleasurable existence. The aged gardener, whose withered senility had, of late, been my wonder and disgust,—accustomed as I was to marvel how so much wretchedness could consent to live!—was now crowned with a halo of sober felicity, and followed through his slow occupations with many a kindly sentiment. Even the idiot, as he was seen basking on the turf, or stalking rapidly amongst the trees, received his portion of that bland and luminous atmosphere in which all things were now invested by my most beneficent imagination.

"You, who speak in raptures, as becomes a poet, of the influence exercised on the mind by the beauty of inanimate creation, are perhaps hardly aware how rapidly the character of nature itself may change with that of the spirit of the man. In my old temper of misanthropy, nature was admired, loved, and idolized as a *contrast* to humanity. I endowed her with a being remote alike from God and man. I gave to her running streams and pendent foliage, a separate and fairy-like existence. I worshipped her with a certain chivalrous homage that pronounced the very object of its adoration to be inaccessible to the lamentable voice of her poor idolater. The mountain and the valley knew not

of their hapless inhabitant; I would not suffer the bright orb of day to be cognizant of the needs and dependencies of man; the tempest was beating on the sacred temples that he reared; the ocean rolled her thousand waves, unconscious of his puny presence, even though he launched himself into the open spaces of her wide and illuminated solitudes. Not by *me* was assigned to the stars of Heaven the distribution of human destinies,—I would not have wronged their beauty with the harsh incongruous office,—I would not have dimmed their brightness with the painful knowledge of this lower world. Earth, sea, sky, and *man!*—Oh, there was no commingling them together.

"But now, in my new temper of philanthropy, the beauty of nature assumed a different character to my imagination. It was recognised as in strict sympathy and accordance with the mind of man; it was viewed as a collateral emanation of the Divine benevolence, emblematic of whatever is pure and lofty in the human spirit; it was the type by which man was to mould his affections,—was at once to be softened into feeling, and fixed in serenity, and elevated into the majesty of high thoughts. It was all that you would have it, Cynthio.

"Now was it genial season throughout all the provinces of thought. The creative Power was again

invested with its moral attribute of benevolence, and the world was again regarded as the offspring of a kind omnipotence. I reflected on all things with wonder and with gratitude. I exulted in my own being. The misery of past days was remote, as if a century had intervened,—it belonged to some other, not myself,—I took my station henceforth with the good and wise and happy of the earth.

"But the same beautiful insect which I delighted to watch as it hovered from flower to flower, or rose with wavering flight from tree to tree, was an apt emblem of my own unstable and inconstant felicity. Benevolence, which has still to seek its object, and contentment, which is the result only of a desire to be content, are but shadowy materials for the structure of an earthly happiness. As I sate at noontide in this peaceful retreat, and looked towards a lofty row of elms, whose massy and undisturbed foliage hung, plume above plume, in the still air, a bright cloud would steal, perchance from behind that high and verdant boundary, and ascend softly and slowly on the blue firmament. I watched it, and my thoughts the while were a music to its motion. But the cloud rose, and liberated itself, and passed away, and the melody of my heart was gone. The flock of gay and sportive meditations which had attended on the

uprise of that fair apparition, had departed with it. Or it was the hour of sunset, and I stood an impassioned witness of that daily transfiguration which the orb of light exhibits as it approaches the termination of its course. My mind would fill with ecstatic sentiment, even as the clouds above me with celestial radiance. But the sun sunk, and even as it reclaimed its glory from the cloud, would it carry with it the brief rapture of my heart, —my spirit was left to float with the dim and deserted vapour.

"As I had formerly attempted to justify an acrimonious temper by a belief in the prevalent misery of mankind, so now I sought a support for my own contentment in the contemplation of the general happiness of the world. But this last endeavour seemed to be the more difficult of the two; at least, I was more frequently undeceived. Imagine that you see me standing contemplative at the door of a pauper's cottage. A group of children playing before it has arrested the regard of one quite anxious to find exercise for his new complacency. I am making abundance of reflections on the happiness of humble life; but while I am moulding these into tasteful or philosophic form, the cry of a beaten child, followed by the shrill notes of feminine anger, issue from that hovel, and disturb the dreamy philanthropist. I turn to proceed on my way, and

find myself surrounded by a number of paupers who have collected about me to solicit charity. Pale and haggard faces that tell most faithfully of hunger and disease, and moral degradation, bring other ideas of poverty than those my fancy had been embodying. I distribute alms, for I wish to be benevolent,—but what can my bounty effect against the wide-spreading wretchedness of the world? I am even disappointed of the reflex pleasure of my own charitable deed,—perhaps, because I had laid in wait for it.

"I was striving in vain to think myself and others happier than we were."

CHAPTER V.

THE PERPLEXITIES OF THE PHILOSOPHER—THE POET'S ENTHUSIASM.

"I NOW plunged into speculative thought, and forgot the wants of the heart in the toils of meditation.—I deemed it folly to love or to hate that entire race of man which contains within itself all that can excite esteem, or call for detestation. I also held it vain to attempt to see, in a world supported by the antagonism of its principles, the emanation only of Benevolence. The endeavour to view this scene of life through the medium of a universal and omnipotent good-will,—it was as if I had been labouring to behold the visible earth by a light which, admitting of no shadows, could reveal no object—which, by illuminating all, could disclose nothing.

"A philosopher, I had, of course, always been;—

for when are we not philosophers? But I would now more especially cultivate the philosophic temper—the habit of calm, impartial, universal scrutiny. The quest of truth should be my only passion. All things within me and without were to be submitted to an unflinching and unbiassed examination. I was no longer the misanthrope or the philanthropist, but the observer of mankind. I betook myself to the overlooking station of philosophy.

"And I was happy for a while in this free expatiation of thought. Passing pleasant was the serene temper that judges of all things, and contends for none. I investigated the motives of belief as well as of conduct, and viewed the passions of men in the arena of opinion as well as of action. I transported myself to the intellectual position of the most opposite of characters,—saw as they saw,—and learned to understand my own by comprehending the minds of others. With renewed energy I unfolded the studious page, and burned the midnight lamp. The gust of wind from without, or the falling embers of my hearth, just called to mind the quietude I was enjoying. It was thus, I exclaimed, my life should pass,—thus always,—and thus only!

"I know not how you and others may have found it, but my progress in the discovery of truth

has been exceeding slow. I am weary of this thinking. A habit has grown upon me of reflecting back upon the operations of my own mind,—on its most secret impulses and motives,—which permits no passion or opinion to keep its place. At the very moment of giving in my adherence to any doctrine, I am, perhaps, reminded that its logical force was not the *only* cause of its favourable reception, and thereupon I relapse—it may be very unreasonably—into doubt. I am at once the most sceptical and most credulous of men. I detect in the opinions of the gravest of mankind some bias of passion, and in the sentiments of the most thoughtless some exercise of reason. The judgments of my intellect, the dispositions of my heart, are alike in a constant flux and endless revolution. I feel that they maintain their short supremacy by no better title than possession. I have stored my mind with opinions of every kind, and sentiments of every hue; but which of these shall be called into requisition, there seems no voice to determine. The flying hours as they pass summon at their will, from the same cells of memory, thoughts like the revel of Satyrs, or like the pomp of Olympus. Never were my meditations so absolutely controlled by reason; never were they so utterly without control.

"Oh, Cynthio! there is an outrage which the

introspective spirit inflicts upon itself, worse than the folly of our errors or the violence of our passions. I live not, I only think of life; I enjoy not, I only analyse enjoyment; I believe not, I only investigate belief. There is no pleasure but thought can mould it into pain; there is no affection but it can dissipate it into air. In vain would I commit myself, as I would wish, to the ties of amity or love. My feelings, overlooked and scrutinized, are checked by the very license that is offered them. The bond that should unite me to another is fictitious,—I hold it in my hand, and can relinquish it at will;—in spite of myself I am always free. Like the marble statue, fashioned apart, and added afterwards to the group, I *seem* to lean on others for support, but all the while rest poised within myself. Generous I could be,—never social. I cannot mingle my mind with others. I have framed out of my meditations as well a prison as a shelter from the world, and only through its bars can I look forth upon the moving and busy scene of existence.

"In this state of separation from my fellow-men, I sometimes fancy that I could commit deeds of the greatest turpitude without a feeling of moral repugnance. I have looked my conscience down. I am separated from man, but have framed no

alliance with Heaven. I have no faith. I have thought till I know nothing, but still continue to think; for I never can forget that there is something remaining to be known. You, Cynthio, who exercise a delightful art, which directs and gives an object to all your intellectual efforts, can hardly estimate the languor, the restlessness, the uncertainty, the gloom, of a life that begins and ends in contemplation."

A pause of silence ensued, after Ernesto had concluded this narrative of himself. Cynthio knew well that the malady of his friend was such as, not good counsel, but the changeful circumstances of life must alleviate.

"Yes;" the poet at length replied, "it is to the Muse I owe it, that I am content to share in human existence so far only as my mind reflects the ever-varying images that pass before me. I am content to observe where others struggle to enjoy—to survey what others toil to possess. I would not barter the wealthy poverty of the Muse for the barren wealth of princes.

"Lo, the world before me!—this familiar marvel—this beautiful prodigy,—this novelty of dateless age—this ever new antiquity! Man, and the fair earth, her tenants!—Oh, methinks I could pass incessantly from clime to clime, with an eye never weary of beholding, and a heart never slow

in responding to, the beauty of nature and the mystery of life! I do love this world. I love it all. I have linked my spirit to it. To know and understand it shall be my dowry and my portion.—Everywhere—in the populous town, or the silent forest,—along the navigated river, or the desolate strand,—on savage coasts, or the busy port where the throng of ships has built a second city on the waters,—through every region I could pass, the pleased spectator of the magnificence of earth, or the creative activity of man. Guest of the world, I still must gaze, whatever aspect the sky assumes,—must still observe, whatever passion mankind shall manifest."

Ernesto smiled at the raptures of the poet, who, however, still proceeded.—"As for me," he said, "I cannot keep my eyes from looking on my fellow-man. Whether I meet him in the soiled garments of labour—so familiar, so *at home* upon his earthy planet,—or track him, step by step, to the giddy heights of intellectual eminence,—a being more wonderful than happy;—whether I view him as the infant thrown into the soft security of its mother's lap,—or as the youth finding suddenly a new world in an old scene, that had long been lying about him,—or note him in matured manhood tamed, and tutored, and bound by kind affections to the ennobled obscurity of his social

task,—or whether, finally, I encounter him as the aged pilgrim, forgetful, unregarded,—sinking cold into the cold lap of nature,—in every form, in every age and rank, the human being is still the object of my untiring sympathy, of my unconquerable interest."

CHAPTER VI.

IMPATIENCE.

Soon after this conversation had taken place, Ernesto was deprived of the exhilarating society of his friend, who shut himself up in a retreat amongst the Euganean hills, there to complete some poetical performance in which he was to try the strength, or fortune, of his muse. Our reflective hero was left alone in his palace and his garden.

In a spacious room, whose walls were darkened with books, and at a table spread with open but unperused volumes, the young philosopher had been sitting in long and silent rumination. Suddenly he started from his seat, and paced the chamber to and fro with hasty and agitated step. In youth, the quiet of external life is no security for peace of mind. On the contrary, our passions, like hostile fleets, take advantage of the calm, only

to commence the war. Ernesto had scarcely numbered twenty summers, and if at this age he would have walked with restless foot over the smoothest paths of philosophy, it was not probable that he would preserve his tranquillity in the perplexed labyrinth he had entered. The description of himself, which we have heard him give, betrayed as well the disturbance of unemployed passion, as the discontent at his intellectual condition.

"Action! action!" he might have been heard to mutter to himself, as he continued walking to and fro. Against the walls of the apartment there hung some pieces of armour and instruments of war. He took down a sword; he drew it from its sheath,—he poised it in his hand,—he felt the sharpness of the point. With such a toy, thought he, the real game of life is played. But what had he, a philosopher and man of reflection, to do with war? He put up the sword into its sheath, and again hung it against the wall.

Passing out of his apartment, he walked into the hall of the palace. Here the changeless aspects of the long row of statues that stood on either side of him were intolerable to his impatient glance. He proceeded into the garden. The softness of the turf added only to the fretfulness of his step, and the splash of its fountains irritated him with its peaceful monotony. By the side of a marble basin,

where the waters had ceased to play, and had become stagnant, the idiot lay reclined, watching the painted lizards as they sported on its margin. Such a being, he thought, was the only fit inhabitant of the place.

Turning with disgust from this placid enclosure, he entered that gloomy archway which pierced the centre of the palace. Here, at least, were the traces of manly purpose. He stood beneath the suspended portcullis, and as his eye rested on those spear-like extremities of the great iron engine which were visible in the aperture above him, his thoughts again reverted to the stirring theme of warlike enterprise.

Issuing forth into the spacious court to which this portal conducted, he was surprised to observe his father engaged in conversation with a martial youth, who, as he stood with his arm resting on the neck and flowing mane of his noble charger, presented no indifferent spectacle to the already kindled imagination of Ernesto. Their visiter was Francesco Colonna, a nephew of the celebrated Prospero Colonna, who commanded at this period the papal forces. Leo was now in alliance with the Emperor Charles V., and engaged with him in the joint enterprise of wresting the Milanese from the king of France. Colonna was on his march towards Milan, and had despatched his nephew to

Count Adorno to solicit him, on the plea of old fellowship in arms, and the patriotic object of the war, to join his standard.

Whatever had been the cause of his total seclusion from society, Count Adorno had adhered to his determination with singular fortitude. Together with the pursuits, he seemed to have laid aside the passions of the world. He, who had been originally a man of ardent and generous emotions, eager to befriend, prompt to resent, keen in his quest of happiness, was now calm, unmoved,—inaccessible, as it appeared, to every feeling which could disturb, enkindle, or delight. None ever heard his voice either elevated by anger or modulated by tenderness. His whole being seemed to have been reconstructed by those metaphysical studies in which he was so perpetually engaged. As will be readily anticipated, he had given no heed to the proposal of Colonna, and was now dismissing the young and gallant messenger.

"Then you will not join my uncle," said Francesco, "and I must report to our Agamemnon that Achilles still keeps his tent? You will not give us your assistance in driving these barbarians from Italy?"

"To the head of my spear as it leans against the wall," said the Count, "I have noticed that a spider has most industriously attached its web; I

would not disturb the labours of that creature for any scheme which a pope or emperor shall devise for Italy."

After this hopeless answer, the youth turned to Ernesto, who had taken his station beside them, a multitude of thoughts coursing each other rapidly through his mind. "You, I am told," said Francesco, "are devoted, to letters, and the accomplishments of peace, it were vain to ask of you to be your father's substitute?"

"No! I am for the wars!" exclaimed Ernesto with sudden alacrity, "I am for the wars! that is, if your uncle will accept so unpractised a soldier, and my father has no disapproval."

The Count acquiesced at once in the resolution of his son, without manifesting even an emotion of surprise at the suddenness of its adoption. Francesco, with much courtesy and many words, expressed himself gratified at this unexpected determination, assuring Ernesto of a friendly reception from the general, who was always pleased to be surrounded with the young Italian nobility; and praising his own good fortune in having obtained for himself a companion in arms, though he had failed as the ambassador of his uncle.

The next morning a war-horse in glittering caparison was led within the grass-grown court of the palace of the Adorni. The young recluse

felt a new spirit as he mounted the generous animal. And here a little incident occurred, which intimated that even in the elder philosopher the fires of an earlier life were not utterly extinct. Ernesto had proceeded to an open space, formerly used as a tilting-ground, to make trial of his new charger, and the Count stood beside noting the movements of the horse., His eye became intently fixed on an object which brought to vivid remembrance those far other times, when his own heart was bold and ardent as the noble steed he was accustomed to bestride. He watched the graceful creature as it reared itself into the air, or trotted past—

" As if it told the steps
With gentle majesty and modest pride ;"

and smiled to himself as he felt his face flushing, and his bosom growing tremulous with emotions that belonged so entirely to the past. Ernesto having dismounted, led the charger towards him. With kindled eye, and mane rising in the air, it neighed forth a joyous exultation in its own excited energies. Adorno applauded and caressed the noble animal. His hand was playing with its arched neck—his eye fell upon the vacant saddle —the impulse was irresistible,—with one bound the cold and stately philosopher had vaulted into

the seat. The horse darted forward, urged to its extreme speed. The rider cheered it on with some once familiar and well-remembered name, and added the war-cry of his family, which, of old, had animated him to the charge. With dizzy rapidity he more than once fled round the enclosure. Then recalling himself, he hastily reined in the horse, and descended from the saddle. And this time, as he caressed the steed, tears fell upon its foaming neck. Abashed and disconcerted, the Count abruptly retired to his own apartment, there to regain, how best he might, the compelled tranquillity of his spirit.

CHAPTER VII.

A YOUNG PHILOSOPHER ENTERS INTO LIFE—JOINS THE CAMP.

After a few days, not indolently spent, Ernesto Adorno and Francesco Colonna set forth to join the army. The Count parted with his son in a manner which had quite regained its usual frigidity. He intimated that a large accumulation of wealth, which had risen from his superfluous revenues, was placed at the entire disposal of Ernesto, to employ or to waste it as he thought proper. The idiot followed him to the gateway, but shrunk back from the crowd which had there collected to witness the departure of the two youthful warriors. They rode on, through the city, accompanied by their retainers, and a multitude of well-wishing spectators, who did not forsake them till they had proceeded some distance into the open country.

Francesco was a young man of frank and amiable temper, of quick apprehension, but indolent habits. Literature, in his estimation, was merely an accomplishment of life, which gave permission to talk of Homer's heroes, and swear by a Pagan god. His days had been passed in the camp, and his real knowledge acquired from society. His ideas, therefore, lay in his mind after a very different fashion from those of his contemplative companion. The one retained them as he had received them from others; the other had reproduced them for himself. "How is it," said Francesco, as, riding on together, they began to converse with familiarity, "that you often attach so emphatic a meaning to what appears to me a very ordinary truth?"

"Or rather," retorted Ernesto, "how is it that you often express an emphatic truth, and attach to it so ordinary a meaning?"

On arriving at the army, Ernesto was received with courtesy, both by the general and other eminent men who accompanied the expedition. The fatigues of a campaign our military philosopher bore with cheerfulness; but his secluded and reflective habits had ill adapted him for the society of a camp. This last was the greatest embarrassment the war produced to him. The

halt was more weary than the march; his companions more dreaded than the enemy. But he conquered this repugnance.—" I must not," thought he, " be driven back from the world by the tenacious habits of a seclusion I have already found to be intolerable. I have been tortured by the insane anger of misanthropy; I have languished in the maudlin of philanthropic sentiment; I have been bewildered in the bootless subtleties of philosophy; and now I will live, even as I see others live. The simple existence of man, such as it is, and has been, and ever will remain,—to this it shall be my only study to conform."—It is evident, that life studied after this fashion would produce any thing but simplicity, any thing but singleness of purpose.

Our soldier, fresh from his thoughtful retirement, made one of a foraging party. His companions, with utter recklessness, carried off whatever provisions they could discover, and extorted such as was concealed, by threats which, it was plain, they would have no scruple in executing. He was in danger of being revolted by this ferocity of manners; but our philosopher reflected, that war had its allowed and permanent place in that human life to which he was to conform, and that the disposition of the warrior must of course be suitable to his allotted task. This spirit was pardonable,

it was necessary;—he himself would assume a portion of this most appropriate ferocity.

The camp contained within it a little knot of deep and crafty politicians. The Cardinal de' Medici, and the Cardinal of Sion, were in attendance as legates of the pope. There was also Marone, chancellor and minister of the late Duke of Milan, and chief promoter of the present expedition; a man distinguished, even in those days of political intrigue, for consummate artifice. All these were scholars, and men of cultivated manners; and it was, at first, somewhat painful to Ernesto to be himself a witness that men, who displayed such suavity of demeanour, and conversed in a style so affable and urbane, were acting throughout their lives with a stubborn, uncompromising selfishness. But his philosophy preserved him from any vulgar disgust. Man *must* be selfish: in a civilized state, he must also be polished: hence the necessity of deceit. If the Italians carried the license to its utmost, there was excuse, he thought, for a people whose task it had long been to counterbalance the greater strength of their neighbours by superior cunning. He felt no disinclination, at that moment, to try his own skill in the arts of simulation.

The day of battle at length arrived. Marshal Lautrec, the French general to whom Colonna was

opposed, deprived of his Swiss allies by the secret negotiations of our knot of politicians,—aided, as they were, by the poverty of his own exchequer,—had been compelled to retreat from the open country, and plant himself, for protection, behind the waters of the Adda. Colonna followed, and prepared to pass the river. The trumpets sounded, and the cavalry arrayed itself for the charge. Ernesto smiled, as he observed the heroic lower of defiance mustering on the brows of his companions. He could not share their martial ardour; neither did he partake of that social enthusiasm, begotten by a common hazard and a common enterprise, which, far more than any sanguinary feeling, composes the courage of an army. But he was devoid of fear: he had little love of life. If he could not feel the passions, he found no difficulty in encountering the dangers, of his situation. He was, therefore, amongst the first to urge his horse into the stream, and amongst the first to commence, on the opposite bank, the disadvantageous attack upon the enemy. Not having yet taught himself to use the edge of his sabre on the sensitive bodies of his fellow-men, he at first employed his weapon only in self-defence, and trusted to his powerful charger to overbear all opposition. But a sharp wound that he received in the side, dissipated at once this unsoldier-like coyness, and, kindling into rage, he

dealt his blows, nothing loath, on the heads and shoulders of his adversaries. The attack was completely successful on the part of the Italians, and the French were driven from the field.

When the battle was over, and the animation of combat had subsided, the philosopher stood amidst the dying and the dead, and saw the blood trickling down his own sword. His ardour was displaced by a sudden and intolerable disgust: he execrated himself for the part which he now seemed most needlessly to have taken in so odious a business. He hated himself,—he hated the victorious survivors, in whose cause he had been combating so insanely,—he hated the very dead around him, with whom he had been engaged in this miserable and revolting transaction. He would quit the camp,—the world,—all congregations of mankind,—and immure himself for ever in some unapproachable retirement. As these resolutions were being formed, Prospero Colonna, accompanied by the cardinals and chief officers of the army, rode towards the spot on which Ernesto was standing. The troop of horsemen stopped when it approached him, and the general passed a flattering eulogium on the admirable courage and conduct which their young friend had displayed in the late engagement. This unexpected and unthought-of applause was echoed by all present.

The general and his suite rode on. "Strange world!" muttered our philosopher. Stooping down, he wiped the sanguinary stain from his sword upon the garments of a dying man, and transferred it leisurely to the scabbard.

Marshal Lautrec was compelled to shut himself up, with the residue of his army, in the city of Milan. The siege, which was expected to be tedious and difficult, was brought to a speedy conclusion by means of the inhabitants themselves, and by the assistance of that mysterious incident which is recorded with such due solemnity by the older, and repeated with such characteristic timidity by the later, historians. An old man, in the garb of a peasant, entered the camp, and, without assigning any authority for his mission, assured the general that, if he would advance immediately on a certain gate that he named, he would be received by the partisans of the emperor within the town. With some reluctance the information, thus anonymously received, was acted on. The troops met with the promised welcome, and became masters of the place with a facility, as the historian relates, not less surprising to the victors than the vanquished. As the peasant, who communicated this necessary intelligence, never again made his appearance,—as none knew him,—as none knew by whom he had been dispatched to

the camp,—the army had not only to congratulate itself on the success of its undertaking, but on the evident miracle by which it had been accomplished. Ernesto did not fail to give his assenting voice to the miracle.

CHAPTER VIII.

—MAKES EXPERIMENT OF LOVE.

THE inhabitants of Milan were rejoiced to escape from the domination of France, and all classes testified their gratitude to their deliverers,—the rich by perpetual festivities, and the poorer multitude by its wonted liberality of shouts and exclamations. In these festivities Ernesto found himself a distinguished guest, as well from his birth and fortune, as the reputation he had so unintentionally acquired in the field of battle. This prominent station in the social circle, his polite culture and amenity of manners, enabled him, after a little practice in the world, very gracefully to occupy.

The smiles of love are the established reward of the hazards of war, said Ernesto to himself, as he noticed the kind interchange of glances which passed between his companions in arms, and the

fair ladies of Milan. Love, it cannot be denied, forms a very essential part of the drama of human existence, and he had still to proceed with his apprenticeship to life. The Countess Zerlina, if not the most beautiful of those who adorned the society of that period, was one whose beauty was at least the most celebrated,—owing, it might be, to an exquisite fairness of complexion, unusual with her countrywomen. She was universally known by the name of "the lovely widow of Milan." Her husband had met his early death in the military service of the emperor, and she herself being attached to the Ghibelline or Imperial faction, was among the first to celebrate by her hospitality the triumph of that party. Of the courtly throng by which she was now surrounded, all solicited her smile, and many were, in vain, ambitious of her love. Beautiful and courteous, she received the homage of the cavaliers as her womanly right, and repaid it with affability as her womanly duty.

Ernesto could not fail to admire, and was not unwilling to love; but a modesty of disposition, and a temper never prompt to anticipate success, restrained his advances. It was this aptitude to passion, and tardiness of hope, to which he principally owed the good fortune that awaited him. His feelings, scarce betrayed by their refined disguise, won entrance without a challenge, and were

responded to without alarm. An ardent reserve, and that delicacy of sentiment, only noticed, indeed, as such, from the passion that it veils,—his acknowledged bravery, and intellectual repute,—his figure and countenance, neither inelegant nor unexpressive,—and, moreover, that light shade of mystery, playing over his variable, and self-determined character, which, by perpetually exciting the curiosity, arrested and detained the imagination,—all these succeeded in shaking the stately resolution of Zerlina :—

> "Thenceforth the feather in her lofty crest,
> Ruffled of love, 'gan slowly to avail."

Ernesto was sitting beside the Countess in an apartment now nearly deserted by its crowd of visitors. A small group alone remained. This was collected, at some little distance, round an improvisatore, who continued to sing or recite his verses on any theme which his hearers, or his own caprice, suggested. Ernesto had never yet given utterance to that passion which was burning on his lips. He felt that he could make but one step from the extreme of diffidence to the boldest avowal, and the most ardent solicitation. And here his voice had failed him. They both sat listening, or appearing to listen, to the song of the improvisatore. The minstrel abruptly changed his theme; and his

words now evidently arrested their attention. The course of our narrative compels us to insert a few stanzas of his rhapsody:—

1.

Oh, pain of pains is love repressed,—
The careless mien, the tortured breast,—
The ardent homage unrevealed,—
The pang with levity concealed,—
Resolve that *cannot* be obeyed—
The vow for ever to be made!

2.

He flies,—he flies,— 'tis won!—In vain!
He pauses,—all is lost again!
Some Heavenly power he now implores
To plant his feet on distant shores,—
To bear him on with ruthless force,—
He prays,—but, praying,—turns his course!

3.

Oh, pity him, ye ruling skies!
Task him with boldest enterprise—
Plunge him in war,—its rage,—its din,—
To save from fiercer war within.—
Ah, lovely woman, pity *thou!*
Smooth the sweet terrors of thy brow.—

* * * * *

As the song had proceeded, the tremulous and irrepressible sigh, the unpresuming but passionate regard of Ernesto, had fully appropriated to him-

self the sufferings it deplored. Ere it had concluded, the hand of Zerlina had fallen lightly upon his arm, and the prayer which had been uttered in silence had been silently granted. From that time was he in paradise.

No need of feigning now,—no talk of enacting like a player his character in life,—his heart beats but with one pulse and one delight. She, who to all others was the admired Countess, was to him the lovely and loving woman. Happy! to toy with the golden fruitage of those locks no longer guarded by the awe of their own beauty,—to adjust them to the thousand caprices of his taste,—to pass whole hours in the passionate indolence of love. Never is she utterly absent from his mind. He is leaning against the balustrade,—

" Ove piacque
A lei di fare al bel fianco colonna."

He plants his elbow where hers had reclined. There is a rapture in that stationary arm. There is a form of beauty in his objectless regard;—there is a touch, how soft upon his lip;—there are sweet whispers in his ear;—his soul lies pillowed for ever on its downy joy.

The splendid society which encircled these lovers was now distasteful to both, as it separated them from each other. If Zerlina prepared for a scene

of gaiety, her pleasure was to be found in the previous consultation with *him*, — in his assistance given to many a task, devised only for the sake of that assistance. And on the other hand, pictures and flowers and vases were to be arranged, and re-arranged, according to the taste of one by whom pictures and flowers and vases were ever and anon entirely forgotten, or claimed regard only, because *her* notice and *her* fondness made them in some sort the partners and mute assistants in his felicity.

But alas! for the ungracious and unknightly truth which we are compelled to relate of our contemplative hero. To lie " wrapt in the fetter of a golden tress," was found, after a short time, to be no easy bondage to his recreant spirit. He who had always been absolute master of himself, grew, at length, impatient and restless under a vague feeling of perpetual restraint. The citadel of his mind was in the hands of another, but old habits of liberty were not extinct, and there was rebellion going on. He grew fatigued with woman's fondness; with the needless solicitude it lavished, and in turn exacted; with its constant,—jealous—care; with its soft, — peremptory — control. He was weary of a passion, which, capricious itself, bound him over to the caprices of another; which now inflamed with intoxicating joy, and now deserted

him to humiliation and self-contempt. He longed again to " weave his own free hours," chargeable with the contentment of no other than himself,—to have it permitted him to be not always happy,—to be again, as it were, the solitary tenant of his own mind.

Ernesto heard, therefore, with a secret self-congratulation, that the army was about to march from Milan. The object of Colonna's second enterprise was the expulsion of the French from Genoa. This city was torn by the rival faction of the Adorni and the Fregosi, each of which was, in its turn, compelled to call in the assistance of some foreign power to maintain its supremacy. The Fregosi were now, under the patronage and support of Francis I., in possession of the government. They had expelled their rivals from the city, and placed the head of their family on the ducal throne of Genoa. Antoniotto Adorno, chased from power, sought and obtained the alliance of the emperor. He had lately joined Colonna with a considerable force; and the objects of the allied army were to re-establish him and his faction in their lost dominion, to retaliate their exile upon their enemies, and to substitute the authority and influence of Charles V. for those of Francis I.

All this was in the usual course of Italian politics, and it was to be expected that Ernesto,—

a Genoese and an Adorno,—should take part in an enterprise with which his birth had in some measure implicated him. Neither was it to be anticipated, that so promising a soldier should forsake at this early period the field of glory! The Countess, therefore, was compelled to look upon his departure as inevitable. Her tears and caresses were kissed away, or fondly returned by her simulating lover. Promises of speedy return, and vows of eternal love were words, he thought, appropriate to the occasion, and he, therefore, lavished them without scruple. She would thus be spared the knowledge of his secret infidelity, and perhaps before his return could be expected, it might cease to be desired. Ernesto took his leave amidst gentle blandishments and tender oaths, which hardly concealed his impatience to be released from that embrace, which, a few short weeks before, it had been his heaven to attain!

CHAPTER IX.

LEADS A LIFE OF PLEASURE—A MASQUE.

"MAY a friend," said Francesco, as he gaily trotted up to the side of Ernesto, "hope to get a word of thee now, thou hast left the bowers of Venus? Who that saw thee as I did, standing with folded arms, gloomy as that palace which stretched itself behind us, would have thought that the first prize in the tented field, and the gay saloon, would be won by that solemn, meditative youth. But where, alas! wilt thou find consolation for the 'lovely widow of Milan?'"

"Why not, Francesco, with some 'lovely widow' of Genoa? Time advances always,—returns never,—we must cast ourselves upon the stream. It is the perfection of life to float with a certain sense of freedom in a current which bears us irresistibly forward."

"What a perplexed, unintelligible mortal, thou art, Ernesto! I know not how it is, but thy exhortations to pleasure, sound as they may to the ear, fall like cold counsel to the heart. Thou hast a trick of reasoning where all others trifle, and trifling only where all others reason. Thou flingest folly into all thy wisdom, and there is profound wisdom in all thy folly. Thou hast ever some excellent logic for teaching men to follow their own instincts. I warrant me, thou wert never in thy cups, without proving the rationality of drinking, and never caressed thy mistress without establishing the exact propriety of being amorous."

"I will look to my friend Francesco, and take example of his more natural folly."

"Do so," said the gay youth. "I remember," he continued, "that the count, your father, gave thee a parting benediction of peculiar efficacy. He is a man of few words, but full of meaning. I understand he was one of the richest nobles of Genoa, and, as he truly said, the unemployed revenue must have been accumulating. There is a heap of gold placed beneath thy hands, Ernesto. I pray Heaven it be not spared. Thy father,—how amiable is philosophy!—cares nothing for the foolish metal."

"If we get within this proud city of Genoa," said Ernesto, "thou shalt be grand chamberlain,

master of the feasts and revels, and help me to spend this superfluous treasure with all becoming prodigality."

"Good!" cried Francesco. "After that, what enemy shall resist us!" And they spurred on their horses towards the van of the army. The admirable Chrichton, who is painted sitting on horseback with a book in one hand, and a lance in the other, might have combined a greater variety of knowledge, and a more curious erudition with the accomplishments of active life; but even he united not in himself two such opposite modes of existence as did Ernesto, when he galloped forward, entering into the full spirit of the scene before him, and reflecting all the while on his own feelings as he did so.

The second expedition was as successful as the first. The Genoese were little interested in a contest which determined only whether a prince of the Adorni or the Fregosi should occupy the ducal palace. Ottaviano Fregosi, the doge, was an old man, disabled by his infirmities from making personal exertions to resist his invaders. The most costly palace could supply him only with a sick chamber, and he was glad to hasten his capitulation in order to secure a quiet retreat for the short residue of his life. The power of the Adorni, and the authority of the emperor, were speedily esta-

blished in Genoa, but not, however, without affording fresh opportunities to both our young heroes for the display of their valour.

Ernesto now entered into what he recognized to be his native city, though having been carried at an early period to Rome, he retained no very distinct impression of it. Many of the nobility received him on the footing of old friendship. His father was still remembered, and his sudden departure from the city still spoken of with surprise and regret. As it was understood that he sought for no office of power or emolument, but left the prize of ambition entirely to others, every hand gave ready and cordial welcome. A little incident which attended his entrance into the town, earned for him also an immediate popularity with all orders of men.

It was not to be expected that the army of Colonna would be disposed to lend an unrewarded service to the ambition of the Adorni, and though it was granted to their solicitations, that no personal violence should be committed on the inhabitants, yet, it was quite necessary, that the town should yield a booty to those who had been at the trouble and hazard of its capture. Amongst other articles of plunder, there had been carried off from the cathedral church of St. John, that celebrated

emerald dish,* which aforetime was given by the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon, and which had also other titles to sanctity. When news of this sacrilegious theft was first brought to Ernesto, he was inclined to regard it as the most harmless species of robbery, and the most pardonable of the many outrages that had taken place on the occasion. But on a second and more profound view of the matter, our refining philosopher began to suspect that there might be really some virtue in the emerald dish, for the venerated relic might, in truth, be connected with the morals of the people of Genoa. He, therefore, interfered to prevent so great an act of profanation, and having ransomed the solid emerald at an enormous price, he went himself in grave and solemn procession to deposit it in the church, and restore it to the safe keeping of St. John the Baptist. This action was rewarded with a burst of popular applause. That he had assisted to bring the calamities of a siege upon the town, for the sole purpose of displacing a prince with whom the inhabitants were not discontented, by one for whom they cared still less, was never exclaimed against, by priest, or people; but it was long and frequently remembered to his honour,

* See Guicciardini, l. 14, p. 260.



that he had restored the emerald dish to St. John the Baptist!

The promise to Francesco was not forgotten. The nephew of the reigning prince, possessed of an accumulated treasure, which it seemed incumbent on him to dissipate, Ernesto now launched forward into a life of pleasure in one of the most wealthy and luxuriant cities of Europe. A house was hired of one of those merchants whose residences are well known to have rivalled the palaces of kings. It formed a conspicuous portion of that amphitheatre of princely buildings which greets the voyager as he enters the Bay of Genoa. The negotiation was soon concluded, and in a moment he saw himself the master of a countless train of domestics, and proprietor of a mansion which the imagery of his fancy could hardly have surpassed. An interminable suite of rooms, with floors of marble, and ceilings of gold, was crowded with the most costly and luxurious furniture. Whatever his own taste could suggest, or the work-shop of the artist could supply, was added to the splendour of its decorations and the profusion of its ornaments. He who had generally been negligent of dress now selected the most superb attire, and wore his short cloak, glittering with jewels, in folds of the most graceful drapery. He proclaimed it to be no ignoble study to invest the human form in an artificial exterior

worthy of its natural beauty. He who had been accustomed to pass so many of his hours in solitude; now lived in the perpetual presence of a crowd of ever-smiling idlers. Every day his table, covered with silver and gold, and the rarest viands, was surrounded by his numerous guests. The jester and the improvisatore added their purchased efforts to the entertainment; and skilful performers were always in readiness to give music at his call. In the evening his gorgeous apartments were illuminated, and thrown open to the ball or the masque. The munificence with which he exercised his hospitality obtained for him the cordiality of those whom his splendid ostentation might otherwise have disagreeably eclipsed; while his profuse expenditure and prodigal generosity rendered him with all classes the most popular inhabitant of Genoa.

We shall follow our envied youth into one of those scenes, when his house was thronged with all that the city could furnish of beauty in its women; of wit, and elegance, and chivalry in its men. The fête commenced by the exhibition of a masque, the favourite entertainment of the times; and as we suspect that our philosophic man of pleasure was concerned in its invention, we shall give some account of this piece of learned mummery. The masque was founded on the fable of Cupid and Psyche, but the inimitable story of

Apuleius had necessarily suffered much abbreviation.

A stage has been fitted up along one side of a very spacious hall. The rising curtain discloses the interior of that palâce to which Psyche has been wafted by the impalpable zephyrs, where she is ministered to by unseen attendants, soothed by music from aërial performers, and visited nightly by a lover whom she has never yet beheld, and whom she is enjoined to make no attempt to discover. The young and beautiful Psyche is heard to utter no expression of joy, for she reflects not on her own happiness; and no exclamation of wonder, for to her simplicity there is nothing marvellous in the prodigies which surround her; but every silent gesture, every movement that she makes of hand or foot, betokens a serenity that has never known or feared disturbance.

Pallas, armed cap-a-pie, and terrible with shield and spear, steps forth upon the scene. She makes known to Psyche, that the lover by whom she has been nightly visited would be found, if once she beheld him, to be a hideous monster. Presenting a lamp and a sword, she bids her, when night arrives, to take the one in her left hand, and the other in her right, and at the same moment to discover and destroy this foul enemy to her peace. Pallas retires; the sword and the lamp are hidden

away; Psyche sits revolving the cruel scorn that she has suffered, and the desperate deed by which she is to avenge it; and now the endearments of her remembered lover, and now her hatred to the treacherous monster, prevails in her agitated breast;—"*in eodem corpore odit serpentem bestiam, diligit maritum.*"

There stands in the centre of the scene a couch, glowing with its ornaments of burnished gold, and overhung by a crimson canopy, which is held back on either side by gigantic figures of bronze. Night approaches, and a soft breathing is heard to issue from this couch. It is her invisible lover, who has sunk overwearied to sleep. Psyche rises. She takes the lamp in one hand, and the sword in the other, and proceeds with soft step upon her ruthless enterprise.

But now, when the falling light reveals the secret of that couch, she sees—no hideous monster—but a lovely youth—"*formosum Deum formosè cubantem.*" She sees (as Apuleius tells us) the golden and ambrosia-dropping locks of the god of desire, and the white neck and purple cheek on which the clusters of hair are lying, this way and that, in beautiful disorder. She sees on the shoulders of the flying god his dewy and many-coloured wings, whose pinions are, indeed, at rest, but the delicate light down upon their plumage is playing,

as it ever plays, with tremulous rebound, and ceaseless, unquiet motion.

The sword glides from the repentant hand of Psyche, but as she stands to look on him whom she came to exterminate, a drop of oil from the burning lamp falls upon the shoulder of the sleeping god. He wakes, and discovering that his injunction has been disobeyed, expands his wings, and, in spite of tears and entreaties, flies from her presence. In a moment, the palace, with all its wonders, vanishes. Psyche is seen standing, in forlorn attitude, in a desolate region. Pallas is there; but the goddess seems far other than she was. No glitter on her helmet, no defiance in her port: dim, and like the shadow of her former self, she accompanies the melancholy Psyche.

The scene changes to the island of Cyprus, with the temple of Venus in the distance. The goddess of beauty appears prepared to mount that car of wondrous levity, to which the nymphs are harnessing her gentle coursers. Four white doves, with gay step and incessant turning of their painted necks, submit themselves to the easy yoke; while others of these loving birds sport around the goddess as she ascends her chariot. Psyche enters in search of her lost Cupid, and kneels in act of supplication; but Venus, altogether disdainful of her petition, shakes the light reins upon her fea-

thery coursers, and rising in the air, departs out of sight. The nymphs, chasing the doves, separate to the right and left: Psyche is alone.

Forth comes the sturdy Momus, bearing on his shoulders a huge sack of grain of every description that the earth produces. Pouring it out in a heap at the feet of Psyche, he commands her, on pain of absolute starvation, to examine the whole, and then sort out, grain by grain, each several species of which the mass is composed. So saying, he leaves her, with a loud laugh, to her interminable toil. Psyche sits down to her task, but it seems that the more she labours, the more hopeless and the more distasteful it becomes. She folds her hands in despair—she moistens the dry heap with her tears. At that moment Cupid returns. He steals upon her, he raises her from the earth, he kisses her brow. She falls—how gladly!—into his bosom. At one touch of the god, the task which seemed so endless is completed. Venus reappears. All the gods and goddesses, fawns, nymphs, and satyrs, crowd the scene, to witness the union of Cupid and Psyche, whose marriage is celebrated with dances, pageants, and emblematical devices, which figured forth the various passions and purposes of human life.

CHAPTER X.

THE SALOON.

THIS masque having been performed, and, however variously understood, unanimously applauded, all the apartments of the mansion began to live with the animation and gay tumult of the assembly. As Ernesto stood amongst a group of his visiters, he was asked repeatedly to explain the meaning of the allegory which had just been represented. One portly merchant, in particular, was desirous to learn what new doctrine it was intended to convey.

"That would be against all rule," said Ernesto. "Allegory is a mode of instruction, so devised that it never teaches any thing that was not better known before."

"Humph!" said his worthy guest, "what may please the learned heads of Rome and Florence I cannot tell, but we of Genoa admire not such

modes of instruction. We are an active, commercial people; a people of good common sense, which we hold to be far better than your refined abstractions."

"Why, that is just what the masque has been saying."

"How!" said the speaker, more perplexed than ever.—"You jest. I suspect that you have but little esteem for the homely character of plain, honest men of the world."

"On the contrary," said Ernesto, "there is none which so frequently excites my admiration. To imitate it is my labour and my despair. I am always either above or below it. To the man of the world, complexity of thought and contradiction of principles are, by his active existence, reduced to simplicity and an harmonious result. The passions of life teach him every thing; yet his instructors are unseen, and he seems to govern most when most controlled."

"And was all this in the masque?"

"No, not unless you saw it there."

Ernesto broke from his guest, and might soon have been seen walking through the suite of rooms, with one lovely companion on his arm. Viola, to favour the Eastern character of her features, had adopted an Asiatic costume. The full silken trowsers displayed to advantage her small

foot and ankle; the jewelled turban accorded well with her dark eye and ardent complexion; and a massy and sumptuous drapery of velvet and ermine, formed an exquisite contrast with the extreme slightness of her figure. A dagger, the hilt of which presented to the eye one blaze of diamond, was inserted in a girdle studded with precious stones. Fostered from her infancy in indulgence, Viola had, upon the decease of her father, suffered from what she would have stigmatized as an act of cruel and treacherous injustice, though the rest of the world would have characterized it in much milder epithets. A man advanced in years, whose intimacy with her family gave him great influence, and who was moved to his suit by the accurate knowledge he possessed of her wealth, had artfully practised on her youth and inexperience, and beguiled her, at an early age, into a marriage with himself. She who was the most attractive object in every assembly, was known to be the least contented. She had been spoilt by indulgence first, and afterwards by injury; and an injury which, as its consequences were perpetuated, was for ever rankling in her mind.

With this beautiful, but unhappy woman, he was proceeding slowly from one apartment to another. She had been strongly impressed by the peculiar character of Ernesto, and whether from love or

vanity, or some more hidden motive, had been sedulous to attract his admiration. Some eulogium had been passed on the lavish hospitality of Ernesto.—" Gratitude !" he might have been heard to say—" Gratitude ! the word is here altogether out of place. The people of Genoa owe no thanks to me. It were injustice to mankind to expect the reward of benevolence for the actions of our levity. He who calls society around him, that he may dissipate his own being in the crowd, claims only of his guests that they bring with them the light temper apt to give and to receive enjoyment. This done, they pass his threshold free of obligation. Gratitude ! oh, no ! Let us live amidst beauty and music, and the voice of woman, and the graceful pomp of decorated life, and let the heart be tasked with none but its most transitory and spontaneous emotions. A scene like this should live in our minds no longer than in these mirrors which reflect it. The light and evanescent image which a lovely guest may fling as she passes upon their polished surface, is fitting and sufficient recompense for hospitality such as mine."

They had now reached the extremity of the suite of rooms, and turning round, surveyed the assembly for some moments in silence. The conversation on the part of Viola was apt to assume a somewhat sombre complexion. " How happy seem your

guests!" she said. "As for me, I have no heart for the gaiety of this place. I have been made to feel far other passions than those which youth and a woman should have known. I have hated where I should have loved. I wonder," she added, with a look of keen inquisition, "what, in such a scene, may be the feelings of our host?"

"I know not," replied Ernesto, "that I could portray them faithfully, were it even worth while to make the attempt. When we give an account of ourselves, we sometimes create the feelings we describe, and sometimes relinquish a sentiment that had actually existed even in the moment of giving it utterance. My own spirit, like your own, may not be altogether fitted for this career of idle pleasure. I dwell within this mansion, and walk amidst this assembly with the feelings only of a guest. I share nothing of the boast of proprietorship, or the pride of bestowal. The ostentation of this train of menials is all their own. I pass the day in petty excitements, which fail in attaching me to life. I devote myself to the amusements of the hour as they arrive, but these are expected with no emotion, are recalled with no pleasure, are quitted with no regret. Whilst existence endures, some source of animation must be inquired after; but how soon that necessity shall altogether cease, is matter of

no solicitude. Life has its wants,—I feel them,—but I have no want of life."

He had been playing, as he spoke, with that diamond-hilted dagger which Viola wore at her girdle, and directing its sharp and glittering point towards himself, he thus continued: "I have no dark impulse of my own to urge this forward, but if another should propel the steel, I should hardly care to retreat. If the small hand of its lovely owner should guide the weapon, I think I could receive the blow with undisturbed politeness, and expire at her feet with the utmost decorum." In his manner of uttering this, there was so strange a mixture of earnestness with levity, that Viola hastily recovered the possession of her dagger.

"You do not surely hold it lawful to commit suicide?" said Viola.

"Oh, no, no! I do but talk—I do but talk. Shall we join the dance, Viola?"

The entertainment was approaching to its conclusion, when Francesco drew aside his friend. "A boon, Ernesto! For friendship's sake grant me this boon!"

"Why, what hast thou, Francesco, to do with petitioning? Art not thou absolute in this place? Art thou not bearer of the purse,—controller of our pleasure,—perpetual lord of misrule?—Do not I

and every idle man and woman in Genoa ask of thee what next is to be done, seen, or enjoyed? Verily, we are all devoutly thankful to thee!"

"But this is no matter of my stewardship. Do, dear Ernesto, pursue whomsoever else you please of womankind, but leave, oh leave me! this charming Persian!"

"What, Viola?—I do assure you that our talk has been of the most serious and melancholy description."

"Worse and worse," was the reply, "when two such people commune together on the miseries of life, they are only getting courage to seek its consolations. They conjure up a dreary prospect, and run for shelter to each other's arms. Would I could be melancholy! But I cannot wreathe my cup of joy with cypress leaves. She twits me for the levity of my nature.—Yet her glance was kind.—She is certainly the most charming creature on this side of the blue heavens!"

"She has a husband, Francesco. Yonder you may see his tall and bony figure,—too old it may be for woman's love, but well enough for a formidable antagonist."

"By Venus! let him have but good cause for anger, and he may do his worst. It is the rival, not the husband that, I fear."

"Then go in peace, I am no more your rival than the bronze statue which she is now leaning against, I left my love at Milan. See, she is preparing to depart. Fly, and offer your attendance. Success await upon your laudable endeavours!"

CHAPTER XI.

A REFLECTIVE CHARACTER TAMPERS WITH CRIME—
A MORAL CONVERSION.

When the charming Persian, as Francesco persisted in calling Viola, received with some complacency the gallantries of that light-hearted youth, it was with the intention only of quickening the passion of another individual by applying the timely stimulant of jealousy. She soon, however, detected the error of this policy. She found that Ernesto was no fit subject to be tantalized into love; but she judged, not unwisely, that his naturally amiable, and now unoccupied nature, would be subdued, or at least enthralled, by one who, vanquished by her own passion, threw herself upon his generosity. Her manner in their private interviews became attractive, confiding, fond; while her demeanour towards him in public grew more cautious

and ceremonious. So distant a challenge it was impossible to mistake, and it came from one it was equally impossible to regard with continued indifference.

An early hour in the morning was the only period of the day in which Ernesto did not now live in the continual presence of society; and so completely had he adopted other habits than those which distinguished his residence at Rome, that, even at this time of retirement, as he sat in flowing robe beneath a painted ceiling, there was always a young page, superbly attired, standing in attendance within the room. One morning, on calling this attendant, lo! the charming Persian, in the becoming disguise of his own page, stood blushing before him. She had calculated well on the disposition of Ernesto. He rose,—he knelt. He uttered multiplied protestations of love, that *she* might not feel the pain of humiliation; he sued the more ardently that his passion might replace her in the due position of her sex; he knelt the more devoutly to receive, that she might not seem to bestow herself unsought.

Ernesto was not overpowered by the beauty of Viola, but he acted as if he had been. He was capable of self-command; but had no interest in his own welfare sufficient to give him motive for exercising it. Morality was disregarded, because

human happiness, to which it is subservient, was itself depreciated. He had too little selfishness to be virtuous. Continuing still to overlook those impulses which he cared not to control, he brought his mind to observe and judge of its own procedure, as something which was to pass in review before him, like the rest of human life. He beheld, as it were, his own image in a glass, and by very dint of looking on that image, there were times when he could regard its movements, as if they were something separate and independent of the observer,—as if the being who judged, and the being who acted were different existences—as if *he* were not responsible for the actions of this other self. The present intrigue was entered into with a recklessness which was the result not of passion, but the want of passion.

The scene is now in the residence of Viola. It is the hour of siesta. The charming Persian is seated on a couch; Ernesto on an ottoman at her feet.

"What can it be," said Ernesto, raising his head at the same time from the lap of Viola, who had been whispering something in plaintive and reproachful tones into his ear; "what that you could venture to request, and I not desire to perform? You speak in riddles."

"Better so, than speak, and be denied. Come,

give me that head again." Then bending over him, she let the throbbing of her heart be felt upon his temples. "Thus is it that a woman's heart can beat! Ah! had I loved less, I might have exacted more. Men give to hope what they deny to gratitude."

Ernesto gallantly repelled the accusation; and challenged her to put his gratitude to the proof. After a pause, she continued:

"They say here, Ernesto, that you resemble your late mother, and there is a softness in that dark blue eye of yours (and she kissed it) which must have been pilfered from our sex. But your mother, it is said, was gentle, and as timid as she was beautiful; whilst you are a soldier, and, I am told, a brave one."

"I have been told so, too, Viola, but I do not credit the report."

"And they say you are a philosopher, one who despises the false opinions of the world."

"I know not what I am. I know that thou art very beautiful, and that I am just now very happy."

"In days of old," continued Viola, "the knight would do perilous service for his mistress,—he now thinks only of his own pleasure; he was wont to testify his love by deeds of chivalry,—he now takes his civil oath to the very ordinary fact."

"Thou art very mysterious. Pray is there any huge giant, or fiery dragon which it is thy will and pleasure I should destroy? Lo! I am thy champion. I will do battle with the dragon. Where is the monster?"

"Here!—beneath this roof!" exclaimed Viola, in altered tone, and kindling as she spoke. "That venerable husband, who, to rob me of my wealth, robbed me of myself—of every happiness beside—what monster of romance could have been more deadly? what giant captor more cruel or remorseless? Other culprits forfeit life amidst the exultation of mankind, whilst he remains untouched even by the breath of censure. But you, Ernesto, will be my champion,—you have said it. Even now he takes his siesta in the apartment, which terminates the corridor,—you wear a sword,—you are no coward to be frighted by false names attached to a just deed,—you are no selfish lover,—no idle boaster.—Oh, if thou lov'st me, revenge me,—liberate,—possess!"

During this passionate appeal, they had both risen from their seats, Viola clinging round the neck, and hiding her face in the bosom of Ernesto. The design in *her*, though not to be excused, was at least explicable, but what motive had *he* to concur and participate in the guilt of assassination? This woman had loved him,—he had professed to

return her devotion,—he had made an idle boast, —he had challenged her to put his gallantry to the test,—such were the trivial motives, or rather the hints and semblances of motive, which were to connect him with a crime so horrid as that of murder! But he was hurried away, indeed, by no passion of his own. Careless and indifferent of all that concerned himself, he lent his *will* to the furious *purposes* of another. The revenge of Viola, whether justifiable or not, was considered by him to be the natural consequences of her wrongs, and to that revenge his arm should administer. The motive came from her. It was her deed. The very consciousness that he was under the control of no overmastering desire, seemed to give an utter license to his actions. He was capable of the calmest reflection; he recognised at that moment the freedom of his volition, but felt at the same time that he *could* submit his heart to the performance of this revolting deed.

Just as a man, walking in his sleep, *sees* the narrow footing on which he treads, and the tremendous precipice beside it, but has no sense of peril, and continues his dreadful progress undisturbed; in like manner did Ernesto traverse that corridor, his drawn weapon in his hand, intent on executing a horrid mission of which he knew, but could not feel, the danger and the guilt. But this

abeyance of all self-interest, and consequently of conscience, had been carried to its utmost. When, stealing into the dim and quiet apartment, he actually beheld the sleeping man whom he had come to assassinate, his arm sunk powerless to his side, and his feet were rooted to the ground. He reflected with sudden terror on himself, and recoiled aghast at this his own voluntary madness. Back through the maze of thought, in which he had been long wandering, his startled spirit took its retroverted course. Ere he had moved his foot to leave the chamber of his meditated guilt, his heart had undergone a total change. His conscience had been roused from its torpor, and his old habits of thought were already abandoned and repudiated. He returned an altered man to the apartment of Viola.

The full glare of day-light had now been admitted into the room, and the Persian was standing in the centre, prepared to receive him, with more, it seemed, of dignity than love. A new suspicion stole upon his mind. He pretended to have fulfilled her mission, and pronounced her to be liberated henceforward from the embraces of her detested lord. She thanked him. "You are of too generous a temper," she continued in a questioning voice, "to involve a second person in the unjust infamy that will attach to this deed, and

too proud, I am sure, to plead in its excuse the instigation of a woman?"

Ernesto assured her that she might consider herself quite exonerated;—the act was entirely his own.

"I expected this from one so high-minded as yourself. And now," she continued, "you must fly this instant. The assassinated man was no obscure, unconnected individual, and even your powerful friends can only protect your life by assisting your escape. Fly, therefore, without delay."

"Be it so," replied Ernesto. "Whither shall we fly?"

"*We!* Think you I can share the flight of my husband's assassin? Where were my fair fame? I could have done the deed myself, (and her hand was playing, as she spoke, with that glittering dagger which she loved to wear); but, however secret its execution, the world would have pointed to me as the criminal. It will now have to whom it may point. I am again possessor of my fortune and myself, and again, I say, I thank you:—under other fates I might have even loved;—but henceforward I must know, pursue, and execrate you, as the murderer of my husband."

Ernesto stood regarding her with a fixed and penetrating gaze, which, on the other side, was haughtily returned and resented by the impassioned

beauty. Those delicate features, which a moment before seemed capable of bearing the impress only of love, now kindled into fierce and disdainful expression. "Gaze on, Philosopher!" she tauntingly exclaimed. "Aye, you know me *now!* But who was first to read, and penetrate, and make subservient the spirit of the other? Pity! that a woman should have outstript you in your favourite science of the human heart. But fly, sagacious youth! I go, this instant, to raise the household with my shrieks."

She rushed from the apartment, and hastened along the corridor. As Ernesto traversed the hall to depart, he heard, indeed, the shrieks of Viola,—uttered, however, as she fell into the unexpected embraces of her living and detested husband!

"Oh, thou faith*less* Achates!" cried Francesco, encountering Ernesto, as he issued from the house of Viola; "Is this thy friendship? Is this thy promise? Thou, who wert to be no more my rival than the bronze statue! Of a truth, the bronze statue seems to have been very strangely moved."

Ernesto assured his friend, that at least he should have no occasion to repeat his reproaches; for he was about to quit Genoa immediately, and for ever.

"Oh, Janus!" exclaimed Francesco; "for the god of two faces is the only inhabitant of Olympus

who can know aught about thee.—What do I hear? Leave Genoa! Leave this delicious life! Perish the women! but do not you forsake us."

"I must leave this place,—I leave it to-night."

"Pray, now," said Francesco, "give me but one reason out of the nine hundred and ninety-nine that I know you could furnish me withal."

"I must return to my solitude,—I go home."

"Home! What, to that dreary pile tenanted by two unearthly beings, a philosopher and an idiot,—if, indeed, that melancholy creature is not another philosopher in disguise, practising, like the cynics, to live *according to nature!* How came the monster there?"

"An acquaintance of mine," said Ernesto, "picked up amongst the mountains of Switzerland. Would he had never crossed my path!"

"But what am I to say to all your bewildered friends?—to the whole town, in fact, which will be utterly confounded at thy loss?"

"Say any witty thing that pleases you, Francesco. Say that, desirous of novelty, I have gone back, to exchange my pleasures for voluntary gloom, and my wisdom for the folly of an idiot."

"Pardon me," said Francesco, "but thou hast done the last already, if thou thinkest to quit this happy life in Genoa. But, seriously, I see that you are resolved to go; for you give me not a single reason.—Did you say to-night?"

"To-night—this instant. I leave all my affairs to your kind superintendence; whatever claims me for its owner in yonder gaudy mansion, is entirely at your own disposal."

"What! all the vessels of gold and silver,—the purple and fine raiment,—pictures, and plumes, and jewels,—do you leave all behind?"

"All."

"And the charming Persian?"

"And the charming Persian!"

Without attendant, a solitary traveller, concealed as well as clad in his long, military cloak, Ernesto issued that evening from the gates of Genoa. He had ample leisure in his slow and uncompanioned ride for the task of meditation. The retrospect of that life he had been leading since his entrance into the world was not flattering. His philosophy had carried him only on the paths of inexperience, and with much effort of thought he had been leading only the life of the thoughtless. The susceptibility of conscience being revived, there arose many remembrances which brought with them the intrusive and humiliating sentiment of self-reproach. When, therefore, in this temper he began again to philosophize—when he asked himself again, whether that perpetual flux of opinion and feeling which his mind had exhibited was unavoidable?—whether there was no paramount

sentiment by which, at all times, and above all others, the human spirit ought to be moulded and controlled?—it will not be difficult to anticipate the conclusion to which he arrived. There *was* such a sentiment,—the moral sentiment, the established predominance of which ought to have secured his character from its late fearful mutability.

Renewing with altered feelings the mental act of self-inspection, he now recognized this sentiment of duty as one essentially imperative and supreme—possessing from its very nature an authority which might, indeed, be resisted or overborne, but in which no passion or motive could for a moment participate. He was surprised that this truth had not before occurred to him with its appropriate force, and that he had failed to observe that monarchical principle within his mind, which so plainly pointed out the nature and method of its government. Peace to his spirit, and uniformity to his conduct, were henceforward to be secured by the authorised despotism of this one predominant sentiment—this new-throned monarch of the soul, to which all other powers and passions were to swear eternal allegiance.

On reaching his home, Ernesto entered its gloomy portals, and ascended its wide, untrodden staircase, if not with the exact doctrine, yet in the fixed temper of the ancient Stoic.

BOOK II.

THE MORALIST.

"Moral truth
Is no mechanic structure, built by rule:
And which, once built, retains a stedfast shape,
And undisturbed proportions."

Wordsworth.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD PALACE AGAIN—COUNT ADORNO—HIS DISSERTATION UPON ETHICS.

Count Adorno received his son with the same apathy which he had manifested at his departure. On their first encounter, he took him by the hand with momentary energy, but the next instant all concern or interest in him seemed to be obliterated from his mind. He asked no questions of his good or ill fortune in this his first campaign,—of the success or progress of the war,—of his reasons for not returning sooner from the camp, or for returning when he did. If Ernesto departed, he was welcome to the unrestricted use of his wealth; if he returned, the house was open to receive him; and, on the condition of his own quiet being preserved, every thing within it was placed at his disposal. He came, and he was master of all; he

went forth, and an unreckoned treasure was thrust into his hands; but still his coming and going seemed to the abstracted count like the passing of a shadow on the wall. The most cordial manner of Adorno displayed the courtesy of a stranger rather than the fondness of a parent. Never had he indulged in any parental tenderness: his son could recall to mind, that if, in his childhood, he had happened to throw his arms around his father's neck, the Count would unclasp his little hands, and coldly release himself from his child's embrace. It seemed indispensable to his tranquillity, to protect himself from all emotions of whatever kind; and one might suspect that the happiest feelings of our nature were forbidden, and their approach regarded with alarm, lest others, of an opposite description, should enter in their train.

The only inmate of the house that attracted an affectionate notice from Adorno, was the idiot, who had now acquired the name of Piccolomente. This imbecile creature he would allure into his room by all the artifices that are used towards a petted child. He would encourage him to lie for hours crouched at his feet. His solitude was not infringed, and yet was in some measure relieved, by the presence of the idiot. The neighbourhood of this semblance of a fellow-creature served to impose tranquillity upon his else unwatched de-

meanour; and this harmless observer of his solitary hours exercised a welcome restraint upon a spirit not always undisturbed.

As to Piccolomente himself, he had passed his days in unalterable peace. *He* had felt no weariness at the placid monotony of his life, — had suffered nothing from doubtful opinions, or contradictory desires, — had been at perfect concord with himself. When absent from Adorno's apartment, he might have been seen rambling through the deserted chambers, and unvisited galleries, of the palace, looking with a faint and momentary sense of wonder at the pictures and statues which met him in his wanderings. But his most favourite place of resort was a grotto in the garden, selected probably from some resemblance to those mountain caves which had been familiar to him at a former period of his life. Its coolness was peculiarly grateful to one who had received his birth in the bleaker regions of Switzerland; and while its impenetrable roof protected him from the heat, the winding passage which formed its entrance, effectually screened him from any boisterous weather. At the mouth of this grotto there grew some flowers, whose vivid colours had attracted his eye, and which seemed, from the length of time he would look on them, to afford him no inconsiderable pleasure. The old gardener, who began to love

him for this love of the flowers, cleared away the weeds from the neighbourhood of his grotto, and stocked the plot of ground with roots and plants of the most beautiful and attractive description. It was soon distinguished as, at least, the brightest spot in the garden.

The idiot would watch with patience the growth of the flower from its first appearance above the soil, till, after putting forth its leaves one by one, it reared its stalk, and held forth the perfect blossom to the light; but no sooner did the blossom wither, than he invariably tore up the plant by the roots, and threw it from him. The old man could devise nothing to correct him of this disorderly habit. His patience, however, was not exhausted; he continued to supply fresh plants, and in such a manner that the garden of Piccolomente was in full blossom throughout the year. There would the idiot lie,—his tall person, habited in black,—his huge, pale, and lugubrious visage half shaded by his long, streaming hair,—looking down, and murmuring over his flowers.

The stillness of retirement, from which Ernesto had fled with such precipitation, had now again become grateful to him. Even the severity of the count's manner was not disagreeable to his present mood, as it encouraged and exercised in himself a hardihood of temper in his intercourse with men,

quite necessary to the perfect discipline of the Stoic. Opening the doors of his book-case, he again brought down, with cheerful welcome, those volumes which, at his departure, he had disposed, with pleasant spite, in most exact order on their shelves. And now, when he walked in that delightful wilderness, his garden, his step was firm as it was peaceful. He looked around him, as from a station of command;—life lay like a conquered captive at his feet;—henceforth, whether he mingled in the tumult of action, or remained in this secluded retirement, the fulfilment of the duty of his condition should be sufficient security for his content. A moral enthusiasm had been kindled in his mind. The same disposition which throws some men into a monastery, had carried him into the stern philosophy of the porch. Here he could bind the vagrant will in enduring fetters: here he, too, had found a task for his soul,—a high endeavour,—a permanent resolve. Far from seeking to mingle and confound his own existence with that of the *race* of man, he here stood out, the self-legislator, aggrandised in his individual being. If here the hope of heaven were absent, he could yet support himself on earth by his hold on that adamantine chain which the *God of the conscience* lets down from the far-off and impenetrable skies.

Limited as was the intercourse between Adorno

and his son, there could not fail to arise some opportunities of conversation; and as little could this fail of being directed to a subject which almost exclusively occupied the attention of one of them. We have seen how Ernesto reasoned upon ethics: let us hear the disquisition of the Count; and this the more especially, as the events which followed, seem, by a singular coincidence, to illustrate his remarks. Walking, to and fro, in that cloister-like piazza, which ran, as we have previously mentioned, before the window of his apartment, the recluse thus entered on his subject:—

"The theories of ethics, which have been hitherto current in the world, or taught in the schools, are but weak and partial efforts of the human understanding. Not one corresponds with the actual consciences of men, or could carry on the business of life.

"Some humane, and some religious, philosophers, resolve all moral goodness into benevolence or love. These, by committing the rule of virtue to a sentiment which itself requires to be regulated, provide, in fact, no rule whatever. They leave men to the guidance of a fluctuating passion. Were benevolence carried forth to that extreme which these *lovers of love* appear to recommend, it would take from vice its punishment, and from virtue its reward: it would so far enfeeble and discourage

the selfish impulses of our nature, as to bring a total stagnation upon human existence.

"The Stoic, indeed, assigns to each individual his rights to maintain, as well as his duties to perform; but, in his system, the rule of virtue is inflexible, and yields nothing to the weakness of humanity, or the singularity of circumstance. The *right*, according to his estimation, is a quality in human actions altogether differing from, and independent of, the *pleasurable*, or *happy*. The judgment, therefore, which the conscience forms, can admit of no appeal to any secondary principle, and an ideal obedience is exacted utterly at variance with the heart of man and the complication of events. To speak in the language of paradox, the imperfection of virtue is the perfection of mankind.

"The Epicurean, with a clearer logic, finds in morality the rule only of social happiness, as discovered by the general experience, and supported by the general approval. But he instructs his disciple to be deterred from the practice of vice, and induced to the exercise of virtue, by no other motive than the intelligent perception of his own interest. Such a mode of thinking, if it could possibly operate with its full and genuine influence on society, would be attended with the most pernicious results. Were prudence universally recognized as the sole principle of virtue, and it were no

longer of advantage to gain repute for any more generous motive of action, how low would become the requisitions of prudence itself! The Stoic and the Epicurean seem both to have been pursued by the desire to liberate man from the terrors of superstition; but the one would raise him to an equality with his gods, the other will hardly discriminate him from the brutes. The one sacrifices all the rest of his humanity to a moral obligation; the other sacrifices this sentiment to the lowest pleasures of the man.

"The only question of a theoretical nature worthy of debate is, whether the moral sentiment, or conscience, acknowledged to be inextinguishable, is an original susceptibility of the mind, which it is the part of reason and experience to attach to rules of conduct wise and practical, or whether it is the result of prior susceptibilities of our nature,—the moral sentiment itself being generated by the same voice of society that determines the moral rule? According to both modes of thinking, the *law* of morality is derived from the same source, the experience of man, and has the same object, the happiness of society. The *sentiment* of conscience, is, however, somewhat varied. By the first we find it elevated into a species of religion, but a religion which provides no distinct prospects of future reward or punishment; by the second it is left to be culti-

vated as a taste, but a taste which society imperatively requires. Perhaps the co-existence of both these modes of thinking, as it is most likely to prevail, so also is it, on the whole, the most beneficial."

To this Ernesto replied :—

" You take a view of things so abstract and general, as to afford no guidance or support to the individual mind. It is not enough to look abroad upon the intricate maze of human life, you should take charge also of the single traveller, and direct and animate his footsteps."

The Count was leaning against one of the pillars of his cloister-like promenade, as he thus rejoined : —" They who find it necessary, for their own especial guidance, to systematize morality, will be always able to effect this purpose each one for himself. And they will effect it differently according to their several diversities of fortune, of temper, or of intellectual constitution. He who has to secure tranquillity by moderating his pleasures, and he who has to earn repose by the endurance of calamity, will hardly regulate their lives by the same predominating sentiment. The ardent and energetic temper will rarely admit of the enlarged and tolerant view of moral science, which is the boast of the meditative man :—as the eye enkindles and grows intense in its regard, the field of its vision becomes limited. Men will differ,

too, in the system they adopt for self-government as imagination prevails, or is deficient in their intellectual constitution. He in whom it predominates affects the mysterious, and refers himself to the invisible; he delights in the idea of an immutable, universal morality, uniting together all beings that inhabit space, and all ages that constitute eternity; he is proud to walk the earth, conscious that his lightest footstep is echoed in Heaven, and falls on the ear of an unforgetting God. But he whose mind is quickened by the realities of a busy scene; whose thought lies in close contact with daily interests, must be influenced by what is at hand, familiar, and perceptible; and, give it what name he will, must continue to support himself on the motive of a worldly prudence. Take from the first his belief of a future life, and his actual existence becomes purposeless and a dream; while to the second an indistinct rumour of a world beyond, which he cannot assimilate to the one that lies around him, breeds but confusion in his passage through the present.

"You, I observe, have adopted, with some modification, the heroic philosophy of the Porch. I wish it had been possible to one of your frame and habit of mind, to have cultivated the limited sentiments of honour and integrity, as we see them realised in

the world, rather than to have adopted the scholastic dogma of an inviolable conscience. He who supports his feelings and dispositions on some first and formal truth of the reason, will find them liable to sudden and violent revolutions. The mind deals very arbitrarily with its own abstractions. They form a very imposing, but a very weak and unstable foundation for the character that is reared upon them. Believe me, there is no room in this our crowded life for an absolute principle that shall never, in its turn, yield or participate its authority."

In this style of discourse, wherein the speaker separates himself entirely from that scene of human existence which he is engaged in criticising, the Count would have persevered for a still longer time; but Ernesto was not inclined to continue a conversation which threatened to lead him back to the very state of mind he had just escaped. He was little desirous that the moral enthusiasm which now elated him, should be exposed to the assaults of one who possessed so keen an insight into humanity, and so little sympathy with man.

Ernesto left the Count, who remained standing against the pillar in the same attitude in which he had been conversing. Adorno had enjoyed a mo-

mentary excitement from the past discussion, but had relapsed from these speculative generalities to some feeling *of his own.* A sigh of profound distress escaped from his struggling bosom, as, at length, with slow step, he re-entered his apartment.

CHAPTER II.

THE POET.

On the evening of the same day, Ernesto had an interview of a very different description from that which we have just recorded. Walking in his garden, he heard the poet's lyre. Cynthio had completed his performance, had presented it with beating heart to the public, and had encountered the silent neglect of the world. Ernesto knew this, and had no difficulty therefore in accounting for the sadness of that extemporary effusion, of whihc he caught these concluding lines :—

* * * *

"—Here and there,—now and then—
Peace to me shall haply come
Amidst the busy haunts of men ;
But soon, I know, her wings will spread,—
She flies before me to the tomb—
To fold them o'er the dead !"

On the termination of this strain, Ernesto approached, and found that his friend had assumed a very disconsolate attitude. He was standing in a green recess occupied by one of those statues which in great numbers ornamented the garden. Planting his lyre on the pedestal of the statue, he had folded his hands, and leaned his forehead, upon that instrument which was at once the source and solace of all his afflictions. "Oh, pardon me," he said, starting at the voice of Ernesto, "that I have greeted the return of our victorious soldier with a strain of idle melancholy. You return in triumph, but with me it is the hour of defeat and disappointment."

"Shall we make it a calamity," said his stoical counsellor, "that we are incapable of attracting the admiration of mankind? The more reason, then, to live for ourselves. You surely will not suffer your happiness to depend on the opinion of others, and that, too, in a matter which, as it regards only their own amusement, men may even be allowed to be capricious."

"The celebrity of the poet," replied Cynthio, "I can live without. It is the *task* of the poet that I coveted,—that I sought to appropriate,—that I grieve to resign. If I am not allowed to be a child of song, I have no title amongst men, and no object in my days."

" If this be the temper in which you cultivate your delightful art," rejoined Ernesto, " then do not desert your chosen task with too quick a despondency. The judgment which at present neglects or condemns, may be reversed by posterity; or your future efforts may excel those performances on which a just sentence has been passed."

" I could do better," replied the poet, " but I could not so far excel what I have written, as to make all the difference between obscurity and fame. It is not a brief and tolerated existence in the world of letters that can be a sanction and motive to my endeavours; and since a noble immortality is denied me, I am willing to sink at once into oblivion. The sentence has been passed. I have not that obstinacy of hope which can make an appeal to the decision of posterity. My labours have been futile, —my whole being has been an error,—my life is without end or meaning.

" I sought it not," continued the disappointed bard; " I sought not this art of poesy—I despised not the ruder toil of existence—I strove to pursue them, but I strove in vain. I could not walk along this earth with the busy, forward tread of other men. The fair wonder detained and withheld me. Flowers, on their slender stalks, could prove an hindrance in my path; the light acacia would fling the barrier of its beauty across my way;

the slow-thoughted stream would bend me to its current. Was it fault of mine that all nature was replete with feeling that compassed and enthralled me? On the surface of the lake at eventide, there lay a dream of felicity,—hope visited me from the blue hills,—there was perpetual thought amidst the clouds, and in the wide cope of Heaven. This passion of the poet came to me, not knowing what it was. It came the gift of tranquil skies, and was breathed by the playful zephyrs, and fell on me, with serene influence, from the bright and silent stars.

"I saw others pursuing and enjoying the varied prosperity of life,—I felt no envy at their success, and no participation in their desires. I could not call in and limit my mind to the concerns of a personal welfare. I had leaned my ear unto the earth, and heard the beating of her mighty heart, and the murmur of her many thoughts, and my spirit had lost its fitness for any selfish aim or narrow purpose. I stood forth to be the interpreter of man to men. Alas! I myself am but one of the restless and craving multitude.

"Gone—gone for ever—is the pleasant hope that danced along my path with feet that never wearied, and timbrel that never paused! Oh, gay illusion, whither hast thou led me, and to what desolation has the music of thy course conducted!

I am laden, as it were, with the fruitage of kind affection, but I myself am forlorn and disregarded;—I kindle with innumerable sympathies, but am shut out for ever from social endearments, from the sweet relationships that make happy the homes of other men;—I am faint with love of the beautiful, and my heart pants with its unclaimed devotion,—but who may love the poet in his poverty?"

Ernesto was not unaffected by the distresses of his friend.—"Would that the offices of friendship," he said, "could relieve your despondency! Come, share with me in what fortune, or the gods, have sent. Live here, but yet no longer than the sojourn pleases. Henceforward, whether you go or stay, half of my wealth is yours."

The eyes of the poet filled with tears as he grasped the hand of Ernesto. "I know not the thing I would not do," he said, "in gratitude for a kindness which yet I cannot accept. I could not ascend 'the stairs of another.'"

"Do not refuse me," said Ernesto, "I know—I feel—how difficult a generosity it is to trust ourselves on the generosity of another! But remember that if fortune has not put it in your power to be the benefactor, and you reject the beneficence of others, you quit entirely the circle of human kindness, and wilfully banish yourself to that solitude of the

heart which you begin to find so painful. Surely it is not a right and happy temper, when, conscious that we ourselves could, in like circumstances, bestow with freedom, we yet shrink from submitting to the liberality of another. Believe me, I claim no return for my gift, but an oblivion of it hereafter; for to know that my friend were burdened by his grateful remembrance would be as irksome to me as to himself."

"I believe it readily," replied Cynthio, "and thus we should both be fettered in our intercourse by feelings of a not very dissimilar description."

"Fear not that! I, at least, am resolved to root from my mind every cause of embarrassment save that of wrong-doing. I allow no restraint to be imposed upon me by vague and secondary feelings. I practise no artifice whatever of behaviour, and silence is the only concealment of my thoughts to which I shall ever condescend. I will speak truth, even if men do not understand, or wilfully pervert it:—that is their responsibility, not mine. Think you then that if I am thus open and single-minded with the world, that I shall not be candid and unreserved with my friend? Oh, be my friend! Our friendship, I feel, will always last. I shall always love you. What is this obligation that you resist with so much repugnance? Mine will be greater far. Is it nothing, that community of intelligence

and affection which I shall reap from our intercourse?—nothing, that discourse which can present me with the results of subtle reasoning, clad, but not disguised, in the coloured light of imagination, —which can, in this retirement, bring the varied world to view, and turn it, as it were, before me in the sun?—is it nothing, that poetic eloquence, that mingled excitement of thought, and feeling, and fancy, which *is* the very rapture that music in its highest state can only *seem* to be—the very substance of that loveliest of shadows? Oh, let the multitude applaud or not, I shall know how to estimate my friend."

There was a conflict of feelings in the heart of Cynthio. He was moved by that sincerity of friendship which the manner of Ernesto so indisputably displayed. He felt that he should be doing injustice to his friend by regarding his eulogistic language in any other light than as the genuine testimony of his esteem. "I confess," he said, "that to accept this gift of friendship would manifest a more dignified and cultivated sentiment than to persist in its rejection. But the logic of a wilful heart is too strong for me. It tells me that to live without gratitude would be baseness, and to live beneath it would be intolerable. This is weakness —I know it;—I also can reason with the philosopher, but I am condemned to feel with the poets.

This your generosity can never be forgotten, though never accepted. Farewell! I go from Rome, and books, and meditation. I leave behind the trance of poetic thought, and the intricate speculations of philosophy—I go to mingle, as best I may, in the active purposes of life."

And so saying, the poet hastily withdrew.

CHAPTER III.

NEW INTIMACIES FORMED.—SYLVESTER AND MADDALENA.

As Ernesto was passing one day through the streets of Rome, he was met by a youth hastening towards him, chased by an exasperated crowd of the populace. "A Lutheran! an Atheist! a Lutheran!" were the exclamations shouted forth by these zealous disciples of orthodoxy, and several huge stones, a favourite mode of syllogism with such reasoners, were hurled at the fugitive. It was evident, that, if his infuriated pursuers once laid their hands on the youth, he must be destroyed.

A few weeks ago, the philosophic Ernesto would probably have folded his arms, and stood aside to let the crowd pass by. He would have reflected perhaps on the folly of attacking the prejudices of the multitude, amongst whom it happened that it was the more important to preserve a zeal for their religion,

exactly in proportion as they were unable, from their ignorance, to govern and direct it. Our *moralist*, however, saw in the transaction before him, simply an act of violence and injustice, and it excited his indignation accordingly. What to him, now emboldened and elated by a faith of his own, was the logic of politico-theologians? What would he now have cared for the emerald dish of St. John the Baptist? God and the conscience! Can you expel the one from heaven, he would ask, or obliterate the other from the human mind? What then is this cold, heartless anxiety,—this frigid, premeditated alarm,—for the safety of doctrines, the whole of which would not compensate for one unjust action committed in their support? "Fools! madmen!" he now exclaimed, as, sword in hand, he planted himself between the flying youth and his pursuers, and, with a directness of manner which left no doubt of the sincerity of his purpose, bade them know, that the first who attempted to advance should lie dead upon the pavement. The street was narrow, and the menace came from one who was no longer pointed out as the recluse young nobleman, but who bore the reputation of a brave and distinguished soldier. The rabble paused. None cared to sacrifice his own life, that the rest might pass on. A few stones only continued to be thrown, accompanied with the discordant cries

of "Lutheran! Atheist!" cries which, however, to those who uttered them, bore no contradiction of meaning whatever. The fugitive escaped. Some ecclesiastics and officers of police now hurried to the spot, and took upon themselves to investigate and punish the offence. By this they succeeded in dispersing the disappointed crowd, who had here found, they thought, in the interests of religion, an admitted opportunity for the fullest license of their passions.

We may remark that there are times when a legal punishment for heresy is the sole refuge from the fury of the populace. But this punishment, we need hardly add, should be inflicted by the magistrate, not the priesthood; for the persecution of a church is but the same evil which is sought to be repressed, perpetrated by other men, and with a mixture of more sordid and less excusable motives.

Sylvester Buondelmonte—such was the name of him who had run this hazard of his life—was neither Lutheran nor Atheist, but a pious and orthodox catholic. He had been much scandalized at the liberality with which Leo the Tenth had dispensed his indulgences. That pope had deceased soon after the successful expedition to Milan, and the papal chair having been transferred to another occupant, Sylvester considered it quite an innocent action when he tore down from the

church walls, where it had been negligently allowed to remain, a proclamation, exhibiting the prices at which the late vicar of Christ had sold his pardon for various transgressions. This trifling action had been noticed by some ignorant bystanders. On returning home, Sylvester found himself watched and followed by increasing numbers; and still as the crowd extended, his accusations multiplied, and greater and greater became the enormity of his guilt. He had committed sacrilege,— he had overthrown the host,— he had trodden on the consecrated wafer,—he was a Lutheran and an Atheist. At length, inflaming its rage, as is usual, with its own lies, the multitude had come to the conclusion that, by all means, the heretic ought to suffer death. But in the execution of this their sentence, they had fortunately been prevented, and, of course, on the discovery of the true origin of these horrid accusations, the object of their hostility was suffered to remain unmolested.

Sylvester was a person of no ordinary character. He united learning and nobility of birth with a Christian piety approaching perhaps to enthusiasm, but an enthusiasm of the purest description. When flying, in the late perilous circumstance, from his hostile pursuers, his first thought had been to save *them* from the crime they meditated; his

second only had been directed to his own preservation. The timely intervention of Ernesto was gratefully acknowledged, and became the origin of an intercourse, which, notwithstanding many points of dissimilarity between the two enthusiasts, soon ripened into friendship. Our moralist sought by the force of an unconquerable will to elevate himself above all the contradictions of the world without, or of his own heart within;—with no feeling of contempt for others, he was not unwilling to recognize, where it existed, his own superiority;—justice was the mode in which virtue generally represented itself to his mind. His Christian associate, on the contrary, looked upon the will of man as radically weak, and valued his human nature only as a decayed and blighted stock, on which the benevolence of God would engraft a holier being;—with no undue deference to other men, he was desirous of maintaining always an humble estimation of himself;—love to all was his formula of virtue. We believe that he would have passed through life, subject to the utmost inclemencies of nature, and the utmost malevolence of man, and at length have died in unimaginable torture to have earned the pardon and eternal felicity of one only of his fellow-creatures. He was put, however, to no such trial, and with the

latent strength of a martyr was leading the peaceful life of domestic retirement.

The home of Sylvester was gladdened by the beauty and vivacity of a younger sister.

> "Her cheare was simple as bird in bower;—
> No wintered brow had she!"

The light and tuneful laugh of Maddalena was the sound of happiness itself. The elastic step and animated gesture of the beautiful and secluded girl,—the intelligent and glistening eye,—the tresses of a rich and golden brown which were flung with careless pride, or disparted with gentle motion, from her happy brow,—these formed a presence before which no sorrow could have lived. More, we suspect, from attachment to her brother, than the love of learning, she had often determined to read those books with which *he* was so continually engaged; and the graceful girl might be seen one moment with elbow planted on a huge Latin folio, gravely puzzling out a meaning for which we cannot think she had any great concern, and the next, standing by her brother's side, and with mirthful sally and sprightly inventions, banishing from his willing mind all wisdom graver than her own.

Such are the contrasts exhibited within the same family, that Buondelmonte himself, the father of

this pair, was a man of sordid avarice, illiterate, and morose. He partook of none of the elevated sentiments, or amiable qualities of either of his children. As he sat amongst them, the dark and cavern-like vacuity of his soul reflected not a single beam of that cheerfulness and intelligence which lay like light on the minds of those around him. Buondelmonte had destined his daughter to a nunnery, in order to save to himself that dowry which he knew would be demanded with her in marriage. It was a frequent custom of the Italian nobility to dispose in this manner of those female branches of their families, to whom such a portion could not be given as would secure an alliance equal to their rank; but in this instance, where a dowry for one daughter only was to be supplied, it was a measure of singular and cruel parsimony. His purpose had been delayed to the present period of our narrative by the expostulations of Sylvester, whose elevated character gave him some influence even over this sordid parent.

On one occasion, when, owing to his temporary absence, Maddalena was deprived of this protection of her brother, Buondelmonte hurried off his daughter, with the haste and secrecy of guilt, to a convent in the neighbourhood of Florence. He there endeavoured, by entreaties, and threats, and a thousand falsehoods, to induce her to take the

veil. When all these, mingled as they were with the hypocritical exhortations of ascetic piety, had failed, he determined, nevertheless, that the ceremony should proceed. He trusted that the pomp of the scene, the concurring sentiment of so many of her sex, the number and venerable aspect of the officiating priesthood, would combine to overpower her resistance. He imagined that she would be unable, in so august an assembly, at so sacred a moment, in contradiction to the pious expectations of so great a multitude, to raise her solitary and dissentient voice. But the detestable contriver of this scheme knew nothing of that high-spirited child who had lived constantly beneath his roof. The day of ceremonial arrived. Decked in gorgeous attire, and loaded with half the jewelry of the convent, she was led unresistingly to the altar, and placed before the archbishop and his attendant priests. She was then divested of her borrowed finery, and spells and prayers innumerable were muttered over her head; still she manifested no spirit of resistance. But when the veil itself was brought before her, she took it deliberately in both her hands, and, rending it in two, placed her foot upon the fragments. Her words, she thought, might have been slighted, and those around her might have chosen not to hear, or not to understand; but this action none could refuse to see, and none

could venture to misinterpret. "Sacrilege!" cried the archbishop, as he recoiled with pious horror, for the veil had just been blessed. "Sacrilege!" was exclaimed or murmured throughout the whole of the astonished assembly. Maddalena alone appeared to retain her self-possession. Bending on one knee, (for the other little foot kept its firm place on the detested garment,) she besought the pardon and protection of the archbishop. The venerable priest was moved to compassion. With a gentle chiding, he raised her from the ground, and bestowed his severe reprimand, and laid the guilt of sacrilege on those who had brought to the altar of self-devotion a heart so unprepared and so unwilling.

Maddalena was led back to her cell. But though she had repulsed the veil, she was still immured in the gloomy walls of a nunnery. As it was the separation from her brother which, to one so young, had given its chief horror to the cloister, she seemed to have gained nothing by her late escape. But Sylvester, on returning home, traced out and recovered his sister. Buondelmonte had been again shamed from his design; yet so far was he from wholly abandoning his heartless project, that he was the more obstinately determined on its ultimate fulfilment. To his sullen

spirit this would be some revenge for the control which his son had exercised over him, and which he did not hate the less for not being able to resist.

Such was the Maddalena, (if, indeed, we have conveyed any impression of the bright, cheerful, and full-hearted girl,) whose presence frequently enlivened the conversation of the two friends, and who sometimes accompanied her brother to the palace of the Adorni. The philosophic Count was startled from his abstractions by the beautiful and happy vision. He assumed an affability of manner, and a pleasantry of discourse, which, however foreign from his usual habits, had evidently been, at some former period, perfectly familiar to him. Maddalena was charmed with the refined humour and amiable flattery which he threw into his conversation. But on her second visit, the Count had grown reserved and silent; nor was her presence allowed for a third time to break the gloomy seclusion of his apartment. Something there was in the mind of Adorno that could not bear the approach of happiness.

Even the idiot paid his devotions to the beauty of this new visitant at the palace. He came, softly, and laid his head at her feet, as he had been observed to do before such of the statues in the hall as had particularly pleased him. The

redundant locks of Maddalena, which clustered round her neck, or fell unfettered on her shoulder, especially attracted his gaze; and the playful and fearless maiden, by way of accepting the homage of so strange a knight, cut off a lock of her hair, and wreathing it into a knot, fastened it on the sleeve of the idiot. Ernesto alone maintained the perfect equilibrium of his mind. He partook with pleasure, and expressed with sincerity, those feelings of admiration and tenderness which so fair a creature could not fail of exciting; but, pre-engaged with his own lofty topics of reflection, these sentiments brought no disturbance to his equanimity.

Of that extensive and neglected palace, through which this little party of friends would sometimes ramble, no spot was so attractive as the Gothic chapel which formed its eastern extremity. Though not employed for purposes of devotion, it had been carefully preserved on account of the elegance of its architecture, and the beauty of its painted windows. The marble pavement was made gay with the reflection of many a saint, clothed in the gorgeous simplicity of his purple and scarlet attire. Here, too, was the tomb of Ernesto's mother. Maddalena, on one occasion, had been standing by this tomb, in meditative posture,—a posture which, of late, she had more frequently assumed than

heretofore,—when, suddenly addressing herself to Ernesto, she petitioned him that she also, when dead, might be buried in this chapel. Why was it, that the moment after she had uttered this somewhat melancholy request, her manner became embarrassed, and her countenance suffused with blushes?

Maddalena had felt unbounded gratitude to Ernesto, as the preserver of her brother's life. The generous sentiments, the noble bearing, the refined and sincere courtesy of their new acquaintance, had rendered him the constant object of her thoughts. Love, under the name of gratitude, was taking possession of her mind. The Latin folio was opened more frequently, but the page was turned still slower than before. She applied with sudden diligence to her old studies, that she might prosecute with the greater freedom a new study which, judging by the effect it had on her vivacity, was the most serious she had yet engaged in. She was conscious only of a desire to devote, to sacrifice, herself, in some manner, to *his* happiness; yet the more intensely she felt this very disinterested sentiment, the more fearful was she of its betrayal. It was because this sentiment,—this profound secret of her heart,—had been not a little connected with the fanciful request which she had made, that she

felt confused and embarrassed on having given to it a sudden and unpremeditated expression.

But her guarded secret was, a few days after, still more seriously endangered. She was sitting in her own apartment before a picture of the Virgin Mary, represented, by no unskilful artist, as enthroned in heaven, in eternal youth and beauty. Her guitar was lying in her lap: her eyes were fixed upon the portrait of her angelic mistress, which divided her thoughts with that new and vague passion which had brought into her bosom so pleasing an alarm. Striking her guitar, she sang to the Virgin these simple and petitionary verses.

"Ave Maria! saint benign!
Thou who in heaven dost bear
A woman's heart, O now incline
Unto a woman's prayer!
So will I daily bend the knee,
And the long taper burn to thee.

"Let never word or look reveal
The love I vainly chide;
I ask thee not my heart to heal,
But, oh! assist to hide!
So will I daily bend the knee,
And the long taper burn to thee."

It happened that Ernesto, as he was proceeding to join his friend, passed the door of her apartment

at the time Maddalena was singing; and he paused to listen, as he supposed, to one of those songs by which she was accustomed to delight both Sylvester and himself. But the words of the songster were not this time, it was evident, expressive of imaginary feelings; nor could he avoid surmising that the sentiment they betrayed might have reference to the listener himself. What might have been the happy result of this partial disclosure of affection, the tragic events which followed immediately on it, leave us only the liberty of guessing. It is certain, however, that the lock of hair, which Maddalena had playfully fastened to the sleeve of the idiot, was transferred that day to a choice place in the cabinet of Ernesto.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ADVENTURE.

Amongst the acquaintances of Sylvester was one Zimini, a priest, a man of bad passions, who had recommended himself by an artful show of piety. A crafty simulator, he had contrived to convey an impression of being more anxious, out of a certain spiritual modesty, to disguise the strength of his religious feelings, than desirous to make of them an ostentatious display. He thus earned the pious reputation he seemed to avoid. He enjoyed with little restraint the pleasures of the world, and practised at the same time the most consummate hypocrisy. An Epicurean in principles and in life, he yet maintained a character for virtue and sanctity.

One wintry evening, singularly bleak for the climate of Italy, Ernesto and Sylvester were thread-

ing the more obscure haunts of the city on one of these charitable expeditions, which the Christian was accustomed to propose, and which had for object to seek out and relieve the distressed and afflicted of the children of men. At the bottom of a flight of stone steps leading up from the street into a dark and narrow court, the two friends observed a female sitting, thinly clad, with an infant in her lap. She had selected her position so as best to shelter herself from the piercing air; —her slight kerchief was drawn close around her ill-protected shoulders;—she had collected together in a little heap some loose straws which the wind had been blowing down the street, and had placed them between her naked feet and the cold pavement;—and after these utmost and pitiable remedies had been thought of and applied, she had sat herself down, it seemed, in motionless surrender to her forlorn and inhospitable condition. Her infant lay unembraced within her lap; her arms were stretched languidly across it; her declining head was bowed down as with the weight of an unremitting affliction. Although a shrill cry of pain and anguish had first drawn their attention, of the two youths, they found it difficult to believe that this had proceeded from the fixed and silent figure before them. Nor, indeed, was she herself conscious of the exclamation she had uttered. It

had been wrung from her by the bitter history which was passing through her mind,—but she had not noticed it,—she had gone on with her own melancholy tale.

Distress so evident could not fail of exciting the compassion of those who were bent on charitable deeds; — a compassion which, we may stop to observe, was in neither of them a painful sentiment. The Stoic, fixing his regard on the path of his own duty, felt least disquietude for the miseries of the world at a time when he most endeavoured to relieve them. The Christian, confiding in every scene of life in the wise and wakeful benevolence of God, and full of tender affections, compassionated without the feeling of despair, and might be said rather to love than to pity the objects of his commiseration. They relieved the distress, and inquired into the sorrows, of this afflicted person. Before they left her, after much hesitation on her part, and with much more surprise upon their own, they learned that she had been the victim of the passion, and the treachery, of the priest—their pious friend, Zimini!

With that fearless simplicity which characterized him, Sylvester, on the first opportunity that presented itself, and in the presence of many of their common friends, taxed the priest openly with his guilt. He bade him contradict, if he were able,

the crime laid to his charge. Of course, Zimini *did* contradict it, and that most strenuously, but they who heard the accusation, found it afterwards so clearly established, that in spite of his indignant protestations, they were compelled to believe in its veracity. No palliating circumstances diminished the infamy of his conduct,—it was an instance of studied perfidy and heartless desertion,—his character stood unmasked, and he was driven from a circle of society, wherein a good name had been found highly profitable to the needy and luxurious priest.

But this loss and extreme mortification were not likely to go unrevenged by a man of violent passions and little scruple of conscience. With a murderer's eye, he traced Sylvester to a retired spot which the contemplative Christian was in the habit of frequenting, and, falling suddenly upon him, thrust a stiletto in his back. The noble victim of his brutal rage was stretched out in the agonies of death, and the exulting priest stood over him, watching till the moment of dissolution should complete his revenge. At this instant, Ernesto, who had come in search of his friend, arrived upon the spot. The position of the parties was sufficient to disclose the short and horrid history of the past. He seized Zimini by the throat, and with a grasp so severe, that it would assuredly have put an end

to his existence, had not the feeble voice of the dying Sylvester, exerted to its utmost, and heard even in that moment of excitement by his friend, induced him to relax his hold. Acting upon his benevolent principles, and according to his own interpretation of that doctrine which taught him to forgive his enemies, the departing Christian implored Ernesto to release the assassin. Raising himself with pain upon his arm, "You," he said, "who have been so intimately, so entirely my friend, will act for me here in the spirit of my own principles. Forgive this man. Let him go. At some future time he may recall this deed with other feeling than that of exultation, and, through repentance, obtain pardon from his God, and peace from his own conscience. Promise me,—pledge me that word which, I know, will not be broken,—that you will not pursue Zimini, nor divulge the secret of his guilt,—that you will forgive him."

Ernesto gave the required promise. To forgive the man, he declared himself unable, but he pledged his word not to be instrumental in bringing the criminal to punishment. He relinquished his hold upon Zimini, and that villain took his departure with self-congratulation at his unexpected escape, and a smile of derision at the two enthusiasts of virtue. "And now," resumed Sylvester, "the few moments remaining to me of life will be spent

in the presence of a friend, not in collision with an enemy;—in anticipation of the purity of heaven, not in contemplation of the depravity of man."—But the moments were few indeed, which remained to him, for hardly had he spoken these words, when he fell back and expired.

Ernesto stood beside the body of his murdered friend, with arms folded and head depressed, and stood thus till he became almost unconscious of his situation, so absorbed was he in a multitude of grievous and solemn meditations. In this attitude he was approached by officers of police, who had been met and directed to the spot by Zimini himself. Prejudiced by the artful information he had given them, they easily misinterpreted the expression of deep and meditative sorrow, for that of consternation and remorse. They taxed Ernesto with the murder. So unexpected an accusation was at first scarcely apprehended by one involved in reflections so remote and so distressful; it was met, therefore, with a faint faltering denial. When further called upon to communicate whatever he knew relative to the crime, which, it was plain, had been so recently committed, he, in conformity with his promise to Sylvester, refused to make any disclosure on the subject. He had not yet entertained the idea that his own innocence could be seriously questioned, and was giving instructions

to the officers for the conveyance of the body of his friend, when he found himself seized, manacled, and carried off as their prisoner.

The utterance of truth, and fidelity to his word, were, if possible, more sacred than any other virtues to our stoical moralist. The distinction which Ernesto had made between an inviolable *sentiment* of conscience, and an inflexible *rule* of morality, was one purely theoretical; for the first cannot be cultivated but in connection with the second. He had made a promise—he felt his conscience implicated in the fulfilment of it—and adhering, maugre all consequences, to his pledge of secrecy, he saw himself thrown into prison, charged with the murder of his friend. The philosophy, however, which led him into this critical dilemma continued to sustain him. He paced the damp stones of his narrow and gloomy dungeon with the same composed step with which he would have walked on the lawns of his own garden. Yet this resolution, to undergo the worst rather than to violate the sacredness of his word, was not due to philosophy alone. It was supported by that indifference to life, which we have seen, attended him throughout his career, and by that longing after some deep and stirring emotion, which always made the approach of death a subject of intense interest to his imagination. He loved to woo that veiled and mysterious bride, and

felt a strange mixture of loathing and attraction, as he advanced towards her dark chamber in the tomb. He indulged also a certain reproachful tenderness in fulfilling to the utmost the last, and, in his opinion, the unreasonable requisition of his friend.

Such was the administration of justice in the city of Rome, that Ernesto might probably have obtained his liberty by a skilful application of his wealth, but he would not pander to the venality of men who had a public duty to perform. Neither would he allow any unworthy intercession to be made in his behalf. He resolved to take his fate with the meanest culprits, let that fate be what it might.

The situation in which the accused had been apprehended, his first faint denial, and the silence which he had subsequently persevered in, were sufficient to convey a strong suspicion of his guilt. But these circumstances had been further assisted by the ready invention of Zimini, who, on meeting with the officers of police, had informed them, that in passing by the place where Sylvester was lying dead, he had overheard the sound of voices in high contention, and had urged their speedy interference as the probable means of averting some fatal catastrophe. Thus all that was known of the murder tended to fix it upon

Ernesto. The servants of the police are informed that the two friends are in violent dispute, and on arriving at the spot to which they have been directed, they find one of them a corpse, and the survivor standing over it in the attitude of unavailing regret. The stiletto also, with which death had been inflicted, is discovered lying near him on the ground, as if flung from his hand:—it had, in fact, fallen from the priest whilst his throat was under the grasp of one, whose sense of justice, as well as his poignant grief, had made him no gentle adversary.

Little doubt was entertained of the guilt of the prisoner; still, however, it was thought fit that the torture should be administered, both to complete the evidence by the confession of the criminal, and to break through his obstinate, vexatious, and extraordinary silence. But the rack produced not a syllable from the lips of Ernesto; nor did he, in any way, manifest the sufferings he endured, till nature fainted with excess of pain.

CHAPTER V.

THE STOIC TRIED.

BEHOLD him now carried back to his cell, from the agonies of the torture. Ernesto is seated in a high elbow-chair, in which they have transported him from the scene of his sufferings. His attendants have planted it in the centre of his miserable dungeon; they have placed at his feet a low bench, which had lately been the sole furniture of his cell, and have left him to repose his aching limbs how best he may be able. His attendants have departed, and yet he is not alone: there stands beside him an inseparable companion; — it is Zimini, — it is the murderer himself!

The priestly office of this man had given him admission to the prisoner. He had been present at his examination, and had been the chief witness against him. He had stood beside Ernesto during the agonies of the rack,—had watched each move-

ment of his lips, — had abandoned him only to the solitude of night. His life hung upon a single word; and he might well watch those lips from which his own condemnation might, at any moment, have proceeded. A man of extreme subtlety, he judged well that his presence, far from provoking Ernesto to reveal the secret of his guilt, would be a perpetual challenge to the haughty spirit of the young Stoic to maintain inviolate his pledge of silence. He now stood as in attendance beside the prisoner, who, on recovering from the swoon into which the rack had thrown him, recognized, in the first object he beheld, his hateful and inseparable enemy, — more hateful to him, even now, as the assassin of Sylvester, than as the cause of his own singular destiny. "How is it," said Ernesto, in weak, but equable voice, "that one, who has himself no virtue, can put confidence in the virtue of another? One word,—one word of truth,—of truth, albeit, which it was the charitable weakness of my friend to engage me to conceal,—would sentence you to that ignominious death, which I,—the innocent and injured,—am about, it seems, to suffer in your stead. Yet you remain in this city,—you enter into this prison,—into this very cell, which ought to have held you as its condemned criminal."

"I do," replied Zimini; "and with perfect security. I know that an inflexible sense of duty predominates in your mind over the love of life, or the hatred of a foe; and as your friend, in the enthusiasm of benevolence, pardoned, so will you, in the enthusiasm of honour, continue to conceal, my guilt. You see," he added, with a smile, "I, too, can philosophize. But, thanks to those pages which I read amongst dreamy, religious monks, occupying their empty minds with the miserable abstinence of their starved bodies, and far more hampered with their natural appetites in this attempt to forget them, than the glutton in his wiser study how to gratify them,—thanks, I say, to the grave Cicero, who has given us an account of the doctrines of Epicurus, which he has shown himself unable to refute,—my philosophy is of another and very different school. This conscience, this compulsory sense of duty, which you prize so highly, and submit to so implicitly, is no other, in my estimation, than a tyrannous habit of thought, generated from the praise and blame of our fellow-creatures. The habit, doubtless, like other habits, is useful in the current affairs of life; but the truly wise man, aware of the origin of this inward sentiment,—knowing that it arises only from the approval or condemnation of society,—is always permitted, with clear

vision and unfettered will, to follow out his chosen course."

Zimini indulged himself in this strain of conversation, not only because he felt persuaded that the opposition of argument would effect no change on the resolution of the Stoic, but because he really could not forego the pleasure of unfolding his own principles, in this opportunity, so singularly presented to him, of speaking without the restraints of hypocrisy. He was desirous of showing that he could, at least, give as good reason for his villany, as Ernesto for his virtue. Leaning on the back of the prisoner's chair, and giving way to all the familiar gestures of conversation, the priest continued to expound his Epicurean philosophy to his silent and contemptuous auditor.

This discourse was interrupted by the grating of the gaoler's key in the wards of that massy lock which secured the dungeon. The door opened, and the stately figure of Count Adorno entered. He was followed by a young female, habited in black, and enveloped in a veil, who, without uttering a word, or drawing the attention of any one, sunk down upon that low bench which formed the foot-stool of Ernesto :—this was Maddalena.

As the Count advanced towards his son, it was evident that he had concurred in the general belief of his criminality. "I have come hither," he said,

with frigid utterance, "for no other purpose than to prevent those conclusions, prejudicial to yourself, which might be drawn from my total absence. In all other respects, this interview, I fear, must be painful to both of us."

"It gives me pain," replied Ernesto, "to find my father disposed to credit this accusation,—I am not guilty."

"Alas!" said the Count, "who shall venture to weigh the easy denial of the accused against the unalterable facts which convict him?"

"That others should be persuaded of my guilt," said the prisoner, "does not surprise me; but that you, who knew me,—who knew the principles on which, of late, I had formed myself—"

"Principles!" interrupted Adorno, with some abruptness.—"Principles, themselves, are often but our passions in disguise. The intrepidity of virtue is not without its peculiar exposure. They who break through the hindering influence of public opinion, do, in the same proportion, liberate themselves from its salutary restraint. Such men may pass with rapidity from the most heroic of deeds to the most daring of crimes. I know it well: we grow too bold: we learn to defy the world. I know," he continued, and his manner, as he spoke, became disturbed and agitated; "I know how the blood may fever, and the arm be

raised,—and how reason, with a thousand tongues, may cry aloud,—aye, and her voice be heard distinctly within the ear,—and yet the arm descend, and yet the blow be dealt! You were friends,—dear as brothers,—but, perhaps, the love of woman interfered with friendship, and you insured success by the assassination of him who stood between yourself and your unconquerable desires. If it has been thus,—if such a deed lies on your memory,—grieve not that the axe of the executioner will terminate your days. Were you to live, you would find no forgetfulness in the pleasures of the world, and no repose in the studies of retirement. You would pass the anxious and interminable hours in ceaseless resistance to the feelings of terror and remorse,—erecting a mound of defence which lasts only while you continue to toil at it, and which is in danger of being swept away on the first cessation of your labours. No!—do not ask for pardon,—do not sue for reprieve: if you are guilty, turn not away from the scaffold!"

There was an unusual and inexplicable disturbance in the Count's manner, which Ernesto, however, made no observation on. "I am innocent," was his only reply.

"He is! he is!" broke forth the voice of Maddalena. "He is innocent. He loved my brother,—he once saved his life,—he would have died for

him—and now, I know, he cares not for death, because he will die *with* him."

"Ah, Maddalena!" said the prisoner, for the first time recognising her presence, "You then, have believed me,—you only,—and this array of proof has not convinced you that I am the murderer of Sylvester!"

"I have heard Ernesto *say* he did it not," was the generous reply, "and now I *know* him to be innocent."

"Dear girl," said the pale captive, as with wasted hand and trembling emotion, he put back the dark veil which still hung partly over her countenance: "dear girl, believe it still, as I would have believed Sylvester, if all the world had consented to condemn, and he alone had said in low and tranquil voice, 'I did it not.' Maddalena," he continued, and tender recollections, and painful regrets were fast mingling with his sterner thoughts, "the world bears on it something yet of its parent chaos, and the kindest, purest, noblest of our feelings are but the fragments of a broken harmony, soon hurried up, and lost in the general discord. There is mystery in our being—it is darkness all. Life to the wisest of men is a strange, incongruous scene—an Ezekiel's vision,—the wheel and the living eye within the wheel—one knows not what." —And the perplexed philosopher, with sudden

pause, leaned his forehead in his hand. He began to suspect the shadowy consistence of his philosophical dogmas. Giddy and confused, the intellectual ground on which he had established himself seemed to be hurrying from beneath his feet, but still he endeavoured to fix his eye on it the more intently, as if to keep it stationary and firm.

Meanwhile, the brow of Zimini became clouded, and his eye restless with anxiety, as he watched the character which this interview assumed. That the philosophy of a youth might surmount the mere attachment to life he had deemed sufficiently probable; but a new antagonist was entering into the lists against it,—was it probable or possible that it could withstand the passion of love? Zimini thought not, and he trembled for his life. He had previously meditated on the policy of destroying Ernesto by poison, who would thus leave the world with the guilt of the murder attached to his memory, whilst his death would easily admit of being represented as the act of his own despair. The careful priest was not, therefore, without the means of mischief, which he now only regretted that he had been so dilatory in employing. An attendant entered the cell, at this moment, with refreshment for the supposed criminal, exhausted by the torture he had undergone. The emergency was desperate. Death would at least seal the lips of Ernesto. Zimini infused the con-

tents of his deadly vial into the cup, and presented the wine himself. The prisoner received it without suspicion.

But the eye of Maddalena was resting on the countenance of the cup-bearer, and though she could not suspect the priest himself of doing an injury to the captive he so sedulously attended, yet she felt persuaded that some fatal deed was being perpetrated. It seemed to her that the execution of Ernesto was taking place. Feigning thirst, she requested to drink of that wine which had been presented to him. This, of course, was granted with alacrity by the unsuspecting youth, who, leaning forward, presented to her the cup. Zimini, villain as he was, saw with horror and remorse the poison transferred into the hand of the young and beautiful Maddalena. But he could not interpose without danger to himself; he had not a moment to spare from the consideration of his own safety, and stealing to the yet open door, he made his rapid escape. The generous and romantic girl, pleasing herself with the idea that she might by some chance be the preserver of *his* life, or at least should sacrifice her own in the attempt, drained that cup of mingled wine and poison to the dregs. On her delicate and susceptive frame the effect was instantaneous. A giddiness overpowered her,—she seized the hand of Ernesto,—her head

sunk upon his knee,—she fell inanimate at his feet.

When Ernesto beheld the pale features of Maddalena, and became aware that she had snatched at the death which had been designed for himself, his love, which had been gradually advancing,—a passion of pure and exquisite tenderness,—a passion very different from any which he had hitherto entertained for woman,—now burst, as if at once, from his heart. He threw himself upon his knees, and bent in utter silence over the dying girl, not daring to disturb the awful tranquillity of her passing hour. He listened to her toilsome breathing, which was a succession of faint and weary sighs, in which the spirit, however, seemed to take no part; and still as these became fainter and more faint, they sounded louder and more loud to his excited organs. At once they ceased, and, embracing that life-deserted frame, he poured his tears upon its cheeks, and his kisses on its brow, and manifested at the same moment the first fervency of love, and the first anguish of bereavement. How dear to him was even that inanimate form! He could frame no wish but to lie lifeless beside it, and to be buried with it in the tomb. He had woke to a sense of the most exquisite happiness only to feel its refinement in his misery. That bright and lovely spirit, whose soft approach had unfolded his wreathed

arms, had vanished from their embrace. His bosom had been taught to glow, that he might feel the coldness of the hand of death.

Count Adorno looked on at this sad spectacle without alteration of the thoughtful posture he had assumed, or betrayal of the least emotion. The only influence which this agonising scene appeared to exercise upon him, was to tranquillise those perturbations of his own which he had a little while before exhibited. He was too miserable to feel the misery of others. After regarding with calm and intense observation the group before him, he slowly turned from the spot, and proceeded towards his own retirement.

Buondelmonte, accompanied by a physician, and a number of attendants, now entered the cell. Maddalena was raised from the floor, and carried home. Ernesto was following in the train, when a rude repulse reminded him that he was yet a prisoner, lying under the accusation of murder. "It was not I—it was Zimini!" burst indignantly from his unfettered lips. But none believed him—some thought him mad—he was thrust back into his dungeon.

But this second crime, and immediate flight of the priest, began to turn suspicion upon the real culprit. It was now remembered that Zimini had entertained a bitter hostility against Sylvester.

According to his own account he was near the spot—one little frequented—at the time of the assassination. His ill-disguised anxiety to press the charge against the accused was now called to mind, and pronounced to betray some sinister motive. All these criminatory circumstances prepared the minds of men to give full credence to the testimony of Ernesto, whose innocence was at length clearly established.

When the judge, who had presided over the investigation of the case entered the cell, to conduct its noble prisoner from a dungeon, occupied under circumstances so extraordinary, he found Ernesto in a grief and turbulence of mind incapable of receiving even his auspicious congratulations. Regret for the loss of Maddalena, and abhorrence of Zimini, were mingled with bitter scoffs on himself, and on that high-wrought morality which had led to the destruction of his happiness. That philosophy, which a little while ago had been his pride, his glory, and his sole support, was regarded as if it had been the murderer of Maddalena, and was loaded with every epithet of contempt and execration. The judge congratulated him on the discovery of his innocence, and manifested a curiosity to know his motive for so long a concealment of the real criminal. "Innocent!" said Ernesto, in tone of bitter mockery. "Aye, as your culprits are

wont to protest, innocent as the new-born babe,—and just as simple! Why did I conceal the criminal?—Oh, do not ask it,—spare me,—the question is greater torture than that rack which I so lovingly endured, and in so righteous a cause!—Amiable martyr! There I lay in most heroic agony, most wisely suffered to screen an assassin from his just and necessary punishment. I would undergo thrice the anguish to shake the stinging remembrance from my mind. Oh this cruel, frigid enthusiasm! this criminal rectitude! this culpable morality! this irrational virtue! this bitter goodness!—Pardon me, if I *talk* nonsense—I have been many months *thinking* nothing but nonsense.—Ah, if I meet thee *now* Zimini! If my left hand is ever again upon thy throat, my right shall be busy with thy heart, Zimini!"—Then bursting into tears, and in voice almost choked with sobs, he called upon the name of Maddalena. "I have destroyed her," he cried, "I have destroyed her who would have created a happiness for me. I needed one to love,—I have ever deserted myself,—I cannot hope alone,—I cannot care for this mere personal existence. She came,—that gift for which I unconsciously panted, and without which my being was unenjoyable, and a perpetual tumult,—she came, and I repulsed her—I poisoned her—I flung her at my feet. Her young lips kissed these stones, and

her laughing tresses lay outspread upon this dungeon pavement. Oh, congratulate me! congratulate!—I have been very moral; and virtue, you know, *is* happiness!"

Ernesto was released, but all pursuit of the real criminal proved unavailing. The very enormity of his guilt had in fact secured his impunity; for the church was unwilling to bring upon itself the scandal of his public conviction. Zimini found a refuge in that monastic retirement which he had abandoned a few years before, to enter on the more active duties of a priest; and in this pious seclusion we leave him to meditate on that iniquitous conduct which had distinguished his intercourse with society.

BOOK III.

THE DEVOTEE.

"Sis fidelis usque ad mortem et dabo tibi coronam vitæ."

"Contemn riches, and thou shalt be rich; contemn glory, and thou shalt be glorious; contemn injuries, and thou shalt be a conqueror; contemn rest, and thou shalt gain rest; contemn earth, and thou shalt find heaven."

S. Chrysostom.

CHAPTER I.

HOW ERNESTO BECOMES THE DEVOTEE.—DEATH OF ADORNO.

ERNESTO could not avoid observing, in the several events we have just recorded, a singular exemplification of those remarks on ethics, which some time previously had fallen from his father; but the mind of the son was destined to take a very different direction from any which the Count would have prescribed, if, indeed, that singular individual would have been desirous of at all interfering in the mental guidance of another.

It was an additional grief, and a second pang of separation to Ernesto, when on hastening, immediately after his release from imprisonment, to the residence of Buondelmonte, he was informed that the body of Maddalena had been conveyed to Florence, and interred in a family vault in that

city. Almost a smile of triumph seemed to be playing on the lips of the avaricious parent, as he assured him that his daughter was dead and buried. "You may have heard," he said, "that life was found to be not utterly extinct when she was carried from your dungeon, but she died soon after, and is now buried in Florence." He pronounced these words in a lugubrious tone of voice, but his eye appeared all the while to be uttering this comment, that neither the person to whom he was speaking, nor any other, could now ask his daughter in marriage, or claim her dowry.

It was some solace to the bereaved lover to erect a cenotaph in the private chapel, where she had once expressed a wish to be interred,—to instruct the sculptor in that image of regret, with its inverted torch, which was to form its principal ornament,—and to inscribe the marble with the virtues of the deceased, and his own unblest but unalterable love. He had no difficulty in purchasing from Buondelmonte that picture of the Virgin Mary, before which she had been accustomed to repeat her simple devotions, and which had elicited that confession of her heart it was now so pleasing, yet so painful to recall. This also he suspended in the chapel, which now became his daily and perpetual resort.

Surrounded by objects associated with her memory, his imagination was so constantly engaged

with the form of Maddalena, that, at times, with the utmost effort of his reason, he could not persuade himself that he did not actually *see* her. The figure of the departed appeared to enter the chapel, and kneel as if in prayer before the altar. At first, impelled by his irresistible belief, he would hurry towards the figure, which vanished only as he was on the very point of touching it. But afterwards, being pleased to detain even this shadow of so beloved an object, he would stand still, and watch it, till, after some time, it arose and departed. The apparition always entered enveloped in a veil, and knelt with its back towards him; it was only, therefore, in the moment of departure, when it turned round towards the chapel and lifted the veil, that Ernesto beheld its countenance. Its lips were blue with the poison, and its eyes were fixed as in death. It was the Maddalena whom he had last seen, outstretched on the floor of the dungeon. Yet, though it uniformly presented this appearance, he would wait with intense expectation till the figure rose, and, turning towards him, unveiled that countenance which he knew it would be so terrible to behold.

The belief in the immortality of the soul had been shaken off with rude and contemptuous denial in those first unhappy efforts of reflection, which we have heard Ernesto describe in the commence-

ment of this narrative. In the period of philosophical reflection which succeeded, and while he was the companion of Cynthio, he entertained the doctrine, not indeed as a truth, dogmatically to be taught, but as a belief invariably generated from the strong passions of men,—hope and fear,—love and hate,—resentment and remorse,—passions which he would say will not be stopped at the boundary of the grave, but hurrying onwards, create a world beyond, to perpetuate their own existence. It was thus that, without having any absolute belief, he avoided the dogmatism of denial, and erected a kind of screen-work before his mind, to temper the dark void of uncertainty: the faith of immortality was included as a part of life. In the days of his moral enthusiasm he made no attempt to disguise his ignorance. Virtue, he was accustomed to say, can endure to doubt.

It is not generally till men have lost something in the present world, that they are very anxious to believe in the reality of the next. It is not till then that they can provide the future scene with distinct objects of anticipation. The regrets of earth are the hopes of heaven. Ernesto now beheld in imagination the form of Maddalena, projected in enduring colours beyond this world; and to know whether indeed he should be united to that departed spirit, became an intense, overbearing,

and imperative curiosity. He ran to books, he read, he reflected, he doubted; he meditated again, and again rejected. He discussed all those arguments which the ingenuity or piety of man has suggested. He read of the unity and uncompounded nature of the soul proving its indestructability,—as if modes of dissolution, gathered from matter, were to be reasoned on in relation to a substance confessedly not material. He read of the longing for immortality,—he found only the love of life. He read of the prevailing discontent of man prognosticating a happier futurity,—and would then, he would ask, a more perfect happiness in this world have been a ground for the discontinuance of our being? Thus was he plunged afresh into those speculations of philosophy wherein the thrilling excitement of suspense is continued through the most subtle processes of reasoning.

Can it be true—this strange belief—that we shall all live again? Is this changeful and dependent existence created for eternity? Shall this feeble light go glimmering down the line of endless duration, and run its course parallel with the being of God?

Can it be false,—this universal creed—that a future life shall recompense the sorrows, and reward and complete the virtues of the present? Shall successful crime and unmerited affliction meet with none other than the equal sentence

of death, with none other than the equal refuge of an oblivious sepulchre? Is the human being cultured only for the grave, and ennobled only to be quenched, buried, and trampled in the dust?

There existed no mysterious Egypt, to which imagination even would lead him in pilgrimage to obtain an answer to these questions. There was darkness over the whole face of the earth.

Above the altar of that chapel, wherein Ernesto might be almost said to live, so frequent and so prolonged were his visits, there stood, leaning somewhat forward, a dark wooden crucifix. The figure of Christ, larger than life, had been executed, with what other merit of the sculptor we pretend not to say, but certainly with singular force of expression. The iron nails were seen evidently to have been driven into the wounded feet and outstretched hands; and a circle of small iron spikes around its bended and tortured brow, formed a rude but not an ineffective substitute for the crown of thorns. In his childhood he had been taught by maternal solicitude to kneel before this image with feelings of reverence. Since that period he had viewed it with many and varied sentiments; sometimes shrinking from its expression of pain, and sorrow, and humiliation; sometimes attracted by the benevolence which, notwithstanding, kept its unalterable place on that countenance of submis-

sive agony; and sometimes, in the vagaries of philosophic speculation, contrasting it with the statue of some heathen god, which he would cause to be transferred from the neighbouring hall, and placed, for this purpose, by its side. It was the veneration of his earliest days that was now stealing over his mind, as he detected himself, day after day, looking more frequently and more steadfastly upon this image. He felt persuaded, that only in that faith of which it was the emblem, could he obtain a sanction for the hope of immortality—a hope which no argument he had either heard or devised, could either elevate into confidence, or authorize him altogether to reject. Other men, he thought, receive the belief of a future world, not as a conclusion of reason, but as a revealed fact, a kind of prospective history disclosed to us. They take Heaven's word for its own truth. And why should not he? His late disappointment in philosophy had not only humbled that pride which seeks a separation from all popular creeds; it had even disposed him to join the multitude against the philosophers. His intimacy with Sylvester had prepared his mind for the adoption of the Christian faith, by familiarizing him with its topics, and endearing him to the moral character it creates. He, too, would be a Christian. With agitated step and confused emotions, he advanced towards

the crucifix; and kneeling down, prostrated himself on the small flight of steps that ascended to the altar. No words of prayer yet offered themselves to his unpractised lips; but as he remained in the attitude and sentiment of devotion, it seemed to him that the figure of Maddalena was kneeling at his side; it appeared that on allying himself with her faith, he had already entered into the home of her departed spirit.

The death of the Count, an event which followed soon after, tended to give a still deeper character to the revived religion of Ernesto.

It will not be suspected that this stern recluse had any sympathy in the new hopes and devotional zeal of his son. To him, indeed, the celestial world appeared as if it were a fanciful reflection of this earth seen in the clouds;—to him, reversing the expression of our poet, God and his angels were but the "varied *man!*" Since their interview in the prison, he seemed particularly to have avoided Ernesto, and he now shunned our convertite, as if he had been an infected person. Such was the established economy of the palace, that its two inmates rarely met, except by accident. At the end of a long gallery, of almost equal extent with the building itself, one of these chance encounters took place, and some discourse ensuing, Ernesto could not altogether avoid the subject on which his heart

was full. Beginning with distant hints, he at length spoke with ardour of that certainty of a future and happier life, which he had found to be the gift of Christianity. "I will not," said the Count, interrupting him with impatience, "be made a partaker of this perturbed and passionate discourse. Profess what creed you please,—you and all other men,—I oppose not your religious fervours,—it is no wish of mine that the imagination of man should be blank, as the metaphysician would leave it,—but suffer me to dwell apart, and secure my own peace in the best, in, perhaps, the only way that I am able. Seek not to extend your pious enthusiasm. How know you that the faith which sustains in yourself the animation of a fantastic hope, may not arouse in another the terrors of a needless despair?"

As he uttered these words, a singular apparition was approaching towards them from the further end of the gallery. As it passed in succession across the long row of windows, the light revealed the tall figure of a man in armour, walking down upon them with slow step and unbending carriage. Ernesto was the first to perceive an object, sufficient indeed to excite his wonder and curiosity; but what was his astonishment when he beheld the Count, on turning round, gaze as if horror struck upon this figure, and then with a groan of intense agony

of mind, fall outstretched at its feet! The figure stood motionless above him, its eyes glaring through the vizor. "Fiend of hell!" exclaimed Adorno, as he looked up aghast, yet struggling to control his terror!—"It is the idiot! the idiot!" cried Ernesto, who had at length discovered Piccolomente in this strange disguise. The loud and sudden laugh with which the Count himself now recognised the truth, bespoke at once the joy of his respite, and the extremity of that horror which had not yet passed entirely from his mind.

The idiot, allowed to wander where he pleased, had found, in a room not entered into for years by any but himself, a suit of armour standing on the ground, and so exactly representing the form of a man, as inevitably to suggest to him the idea of getting into the empty case. After many and laborious efforts, he had contrived to attach to himself the greater part of the suit, and it was the ill-arrangement of his novel accoutrements, which, restricting all redundancy of motion, had rendered his gait slow and solemn, and such as became so stately an apparition. The object he presented was well calculated at a first and distant sight to startle the beholder, but this could not possibly account for the extreme terror which had fallen upon one who was not easily alarmed. The next

day Ernesto went in search of that suit of armour which had produced so extraordinary an effect, but it was nowhere to be found. He could only learn from the domestics that it had belonged to one of the family,—it was believed, to an elder brother of the Count.

About this time the health of Adorno began to alter. He was rendered incapable of pursuing those intellectual tasks, which were the customary occupation of his day. And now his step lost its firmness, and his brow its marble-like repose. His voice became harsh, his manner abrupt and uncontrolled. He would walk in a small space of that cloister which ran before his windows, to and fro, with the ceaseless and giddy motion of the confined tiger; or he would stand stationary for hours together against one of its pillars, his eyes fixed and glazed by no enviable meditation. The idiot once approached him as he stood in this attitude. Starting from his reverie, he grasped the imbecile creature, as if his own silent thoughts had been heard and understood by the intruder. But when he recognised Piccolomente, and saw who it was that he had so rudely seized, he fell upon the neck of the idiot, and wept. "Oh thou of human form, not human! sole semblance of mankind, with whom I dare claim society! Do not you forsake me!" And as he spoke thus his

tears were falling down the coarse lank hair of the idiot.

Sleep had deserted the unhappy Count, or scared him from his pillow with the terrors that it brought. He might have been seen in the dead of night, a small lamp in his hand, wandering from room to room of that desolate mansion. Sometimes he fled with rapidity past those statues which stood in great numbers about the palace, and which his imagination invested with a consciousness and observation of his presence. At other times he courted a kind of frightful companionship with the marble figure, gazing on it steadfastly with many and wild emotions, and finding always in its unchanging aspect a dreadful sympathy with his own varying and terrific passions. He would rise at midnight, and entering his library, sit down and write page after page of hurried and blotted manuscript. Whether driven by an irresistible impulse that urged him to make disclosure of some secret guilt, or whether by giving expression, he found relief, to his agony of thought, we cannot tell; but on these occasions he would fill many sheets with a fearful haste, and then grappling them in his hands, hold them in the lamp, one after the other, till they were utterly consumed. He would even remove the ashes of the paper from the room.

We look over his shoulder as he is seated at this midnight composition. His pen is passing over the sheet of paper as fast as his hand can guide it.

"Oh, beautiful!—beautiful was the affianced bride! I beheld,—I loved,—I *must* have loved, or quenched my passion in my death. I slew the bridegroom,—I slew my brother! She was mine, —mine!—I clasped her in my arms;—but there was blood upon her brow! My brother stood beside us as we talked;—she was still my brother's wife. Remorse received me in her fond and innocent embrace!

"Lovely was the child of our union!—I raised it to my lips,—I pressed it to my heart. It should have been my brother's,—it was like my brother, as it smiled. I could not, I dared not, love my child;—remorse clung to me in the soft seizure of my infant's arms!

"Oh, horrible!—horrible!—Remorse was intermingled with the sweetest joys and dearest affections of life! I rushed back upon my own heart; —I tore, I eradicated, I plucked up, *all!* I had murdered my brother! and love, honour, piety,— all good thoughts,—were become my enemies; and I banished them from my desolated soul! It was my dread necessity to forget all that was sweet

in life, and all that was awful in death! I was a blank,—a void! I learned to look upon my own crime with cold and torpid speculation. I involved and confounded it with the infinite transactions of a world, the sole and ultimate judge of its own multifarious existence.

"But the minds of others encompassed and enthralled me. I was borne away and involved in the eddying thoughts of a multitude. Lo, the high priest of the temple of Jerusalem! He passes on, amidst religious pomps and adoring thousands. On he walks, from court to court, and their glories are disregarded in that blaze which he anticipates in the holy of holies, to which, for the first time, he is approaching. He lifts the veil,—he enters;—the solitary man stands in a blank and empty chamber! But he returns to the people, and as he again kneels with them before the veil, it again conceals the abode of power and of majesty. And thus it was with me: I, too, could pass beyond the veil; but if I mingled with the crowd, I felt the superstitions of the crowd. If I mingled with life, I took part of the faith which life originates. Every passion seemed to push my feet beyond the boundaries of the grave. I resolved to dwell apart; I retreated from all feeling; I would reason only—I would reason always.

"I learned all that is subtle and secret in the operations of the mind. This idea of Deity—I can analyse it,—I can destroy! But, oh! it recombines,—it is indestructible! There is a voice that goes about the world, and it whispers hope to one, and despair to another. I question it, and it is dumb; I am silent, and it speaks again. There is a shape that rises on the mind, of awful brow. I look upon it, and, as I gaze, the folds of the drapery close over it, and the form becomes obscure, and totters in the air, and falls into vacancy. But the eye is wearied, and relaxes of its scrutiny; and, lo! the apparition re-ascends. The veil parts from its forehead, and it stands before me in its first and terrible distinctness! I can disbelieve only whilst proving my disbelief. I can deny, but cannot look back on my own denial. There is no science of theology; there is no escape from God!

"I will recede still farther from all the thoughts of men,—I will hide for ever in that total eclipse of truth, which falls on him who persists in asking what truth *is*. In this darkness there is shelter and repose. Say! what is the mind of man but a reflection of the natural world without? What is this world but a projected image of the forming mind within? Where is truth? where reality? where any place, or station, in which reason can

erect her structure? We are phantoms,—phantoms!—existing, it seems, between the two worlds of matter and of spirit: created of both: ignorant of either. The mind of man is its own idle world. —Ah! what avails, if, also, it is his own God?—its own vindictive judge?

"Oh, Piccolomente!—Come, thou idiot!—come, save me from myself! Crouch thee at my feet,—lay thy head upon my lap. Look on me! I love thee,—I envy thee;—I have calm and hopeful thoughts while gazing on thee. The murmur of thy slabbering lips is grateful to my ear—the wildness of thine eye is as beauty to my desolated heart.—Oh, that I were as thou art, happy idiot!"

In one of his nocturnal rambles through the precincts of the palace, his unquiet step led him within the sombre stillness of the Gothic chapel, and brought him before its altar and its overhanging crucifix. What reflections were passing through his mind, as with lamp raised in his hand he stood before that figure, it were long to describe. He who was acquainted with all modes of thought, and the operation of every principle of religious belief, could not fail of having abundant subject for meditation as he gazed, with burdened heart, upon the image of God the Intercessor! Long he stood erect before the crucifix, but at length the

unbended knee began to tremble,—the lamp was put down upon the altar,—and before those pierced and wounded feet, where the son had sought his hopes of immortality, was the father now prostrated in search of pardon for his guilt. But his heart had too often resisted—his mind had worn too perseveringly the fetters of her own forging,—it was too late! To him also it seemed, that as he knelt some other was kneeling by his side. He turned, and met the grinning idiot, who had followed him, and imitated his posture of devotion. "I knew not that we were at our prayers together," said the Count, with quiet phrase, but utmost bitterness of heart. They both rose. The idiot then extended his tall person, stretching out his arms, and hanging his head in mimickry of the figure on the cross. "Ha! ha! thou only true philosopher!" cried Adorno. A peal of thunder was heard to roll over the roof of the chapel. The idiot responded with his harsh and inhuman laughter, and the dispairing Count joined in this expression of unnatural mirth. Arm in arm they reeled through the darkness together, like boon companions in madness; and room after room of that vacant palace reechoed with the mingled shouts of the atheist and the idiot!

The mortal fever which was now raging in his

veins, Adorno took no measures to abate. Determined not to delay the approach of death, however terrible it might appear, he shut himself up within his chamber, with the idiot only to attend on him, and issued strict commands that no other person should seek admittance.

Ernesto, who had been particularly alluded to in this injunction, obeyed it for several days. But as he recalled to mind those many circumstances that gave hint of some tremendous secret which it was the constant effort of the Count either to forget or render harmless to his peace,—and especially remembered that agitated demeanour in the prison, and those terrors manifested in the gallery before the spectre-like appearance of the idiot, which pointed at the very nature of his crime,—the desire of Ernesto to see and speak once more to his father became more powerful than he could repress. An intense feeling of curiosity and suspense was added to his filial sentiment. He stole towards the forbidden chamber. Listening at the door, he found that all within was silent. At length he ventured to enter. Count Adorno lay dead upon his couch, and the idiot, bending his lengthy figure over him, was looking steadfastly into his eyes. Even the torpid faculties of that imbecile creature had been startled into wonder by the horrid glare

and dreadful distortions of the dying countenance.

Ernesto threw himself upon his knees beside the couch, and from that hour devoted his soul to God.

The idiot with a bound, ran to his grotto and his flowers.

CHAPTER II.

THE HERMITAGE.

MIDWAY on the coast between Rome and Naples there stood the bare walls of a religious edifice, a naked and austere ruin, which had many years ago been deserted by its pious tenantry for a spot less barren and exposed. Of this ruinous pile Ernesto found no difficulty in making himself proprietor. Workmen were despatched to render one of the apartments habitable; arrangements were made for the supply of the very simplest means of subsistence; and our devotee sallied forth to take possession of that hermitage, wherein he was to spend the residue of his days. If there was indeed a future scene of eternal misery or eternal happiness, this brief existence could have, he thought, no other object than to avoid the one and secure the other. He welcomed that tempest of religious

terrors, which drove him into a harbour, where, at least, there would be safe anchorage for the present life.

A wooden table, one side of which was inserted into the mouldering wall, a small crucifix, a Latin bible, the one uncompanionable chair, and, for his repose at night, a couch with a long mantle thrown over it,—such were the contents of that narrow apartment which was henceforward to be the scene of his uninterrupted devotions. The latticed window looked forth upon the wide and desolate ocean; the interior of his abode presented a repulsive contrast between its new and meagre furniture and the dark, fretted stone-work of its ancient walls. Certainly there was nothing without or within to tempt the mind to levity, or allure to thoughts of pleasure. Nor was the first impression which this place of voluntary exile created, such as the young devotee was altogether prepared to withstand.

Ernesto had been impatient to reach the destined scene of his spiritual life, which seemed till then to be not fully entered upon. He had sometimes ridden so fast, that the servant who followed him had great difficulty in keeping equal pace. But when he had dismissed his attendant, and taken full possession of his quiet cell,—when the last trampling of the horses' feet was heard, and he looked around upon the dwelling he had chosen, so severe,

so unfriendly, clothed with no remembrances either of the joys or sorrows of the past,—when he sat himself down and contemplated the stern and cheerless solitude to which he had doomed himself, his courage failed him. Deprived entirely of the support of neighbour minds, it seemed that his own was already sinking into a frightful inanity. He started from his seat as if to make an immediate escape from loneliness so fearful and intolerable. He rushed from the apartment, and stood in the open air, but here his wistful eye fell only on the boundless sea, and his listening ear caught nothing but the repeated sound of its waves rolling along the extended sands. He wept, as a child weeps, at the unkind prospect around him.

He remembered that at the distance of about a league stood a few cottages, where his servant might still be resting with his horses. Thither he turned—he hastened—he ran.—But he was too late. A horseman, he was told, with a led horse had tarried there some minutes, but had again proceeded on his journey. At this answer, he returned, and as if his sole hope of escape had depended on it, retraced his way with slow and desponding steps to his melancholy asylum. Here fatigue secured to him the kind oblivion of sleep.

Having, however, on the next morning, regained

his composure, he felt abashed at the cowardly entrance he had made on this arena of his pious enterprise. He now attired himself in the simple and austere habit of a monk,—one coarse, dark vesture, bound to the waist by no other girdle than a rope. A peasant from the nearest cottages came on alternate days to fill his pitcher with clear water, and his basket with its vegetable provender. He became gradually reconciled and habituated to his prescribed mode of existence; and the day which, at first, had extended to an immeasurable length, appeared afterwards to shrink into surprising brevity. He had brought with him no instrument for measuring the lapse of time. The approach of faintness told him when to partake of his abstemious meal, of exhaustion when to resort to his unindulgent couch. There was little need of distinguishing the arrival of hours which brought with them no variety of delight or occupation. He kept no account of days and weeks as they passed, and made no prospective reckoning of those that were to come. The tendency to fix upon some period of the future, as a point to be reached, or overpassed, was altogether discouraged: it was thought to engender impatience and a foolish habit of expectancy. To him there was but one interval of duration,—life; but one era in the future,—

death. In moments of fervid transport he would pronounce that he had already entered upon eternity!

It will not be expected or desired that we should give a lengthened description of a state of mind so familiar to every imagination as that of the anchorite of the Roman Catholic faith. Ernesto spent the day in monotonous devotions, varied by transient ecstacies, and intervals of cheerless gloom. The absence of those trifling expectations which lead us on from hour to hour, and from day to day, though it tended to produce a certain stolid patience, yet gave to ennui, when it came, a terrific character, that the man of society can hardly appreciate. His distressful weariness appeared interminable. It was with him as with the Amorites of old, — the sun stood still upon his afflictions, and the eye of Heaven refused to close upon his sufferings. Long and dreary was the interval ere the day began to move, and life again proceeded on its course.

Love, hope, gratitude, all passions that had been disappointed in society, found exercise in religious themes, and were enjoyed by the anchorite, safe from the disturbances of the world; — not safe, however, from the sudden revolutions of his own high-wrought imagination. His pious seclusion was not always a security even for the steadfast-

ness of his faith. At the very hour of prayer, the objects of his adoration would sometimes slide from him; and the celestial vision that had occupied his mind would appear no other than the offspring of fancy. If the rising sun woke him out of deep slumbers, and thrusting open the small latticed window of his apartment, he looked out on the bright wilderness of glancing waves, and met the fresh breeze upon his cheek, the heated enthusiasm of the prior evening would seem altogether foreign to his mind, and the actual existence he had been lately leading was remembered like a dream. For half that day he would wander about in the blankness of unbelief; till on a sudden, as if by touch of magic, the devotional rapture would return, and he knelt again before the paternal throne of Heaven, and mingled again with its bright family of angels and of saints.

More than a year had been passed in this seclusion, when seated as usual in his plain, wooden chair, his bible and his ivory crucifix before him, and his elbow leaning on that which was at once his table and his altar, the meditations of the anchorite were interrupted by a slight tapping at his door. One of his former friends, he thought, had traced him to his retirement, and he prepared a stern repulse for the intrusive kindness of his

visitor. Yet it was probably with some degree of disappointment, that, on the latch being lifted, he beheld a stranger enter, who, clothed like himself in monastic weeds, greeted him with a pious *Benedicite!* This was a monk proceeding into Germany upon some mission of his brotherhood, and who, in accordance with his disposition, or sense of duty, was pursuing his way by the least frequented, and the least pleasurable path he could select. Hearing that a holy hermit dwelt on the sea-coast, he had deflected a little from his course, that he might pay a visit so agreeable to his inclination. With such a host he might be sure that his appetite would not be tempted to any unlawful indulgence, whilst his piety, he might hope, would be refreshed and invigorated. The man was voluble of speech, and was pleased moreover with the opportunity afforded him of discoursing on his favourite topics of polemical divinity.

The hermitage being provided, as we have already hinted, but with one chair, the two monastic figures seated themselves together on the narrow couch, the better to pursue their conversation. The discourse of this ghostly visitor ran upon disputed points of faith, and the nice and anxious distinctions of orthodoxy. In such a dialogue, Ernesto, hermit as he was, felt himself quite in his

noviciate. He had never *spoken* on those articles of creed which formed the basis of his constant meditations. That which he had often tacitly acknowledged appeared somewhat strange and novel to him, when he now gave it language,—still more strange, and still less familiar, when he heard it pronounced by the lips of this contentious monk. The religion of Ernesto had been the creature of his own wants and passions, and those solemn denunciations which he believed *for himself*, were hardly apprehended as applicable with equal force to the rest of mankind. His embarrassment was therefore increased, when his zealous companion proceeded to express an overwhelming concern for the maintenance of the true and Catholic faith, and a corresponding horror of the guilt of heresy. It was plain, from intimations which the monk let fall, that his present mission was of an inquisitorial nature, connected with the persecution of the protestants. A conversation could not have been devised more irritating to the feelings, or disturbing to the faith of our hermit.

His guest now advanced to the topic of his own more personal feelings, and here the paleness and emaciation of his countenance testified to the severity of that religious discipline which he boasted to have undergone. On his uttering some violent expression of self-crimination, Ernesto suggested

that he had probably allowed himself to exaggerate the heinousness of his guilt. "That were difficult to do," replied the monk. "But if my guilt has been great, great also has been the penance I have borne, great also has been the mercy I have received. I would not wish to have been less culpable! It is the remembrance of the penalty incurred that binds me to the faith which pardons; it is the indelible stigma of crime that puts a gulf between me and man, and fits me to do the work of Heaven with unhesitating heart." Ernesto shuddered at this revolting ecstacy, and called to mind the far different Christianity of his friend Sylvester. He contented himself, however, with repeating his former hope that the penitent had magnified to himself the enormity of his guilt. "Ah!" said the monk, "you live apart from men and cities, or you would not need to be told what crimes are connected with the name of Zimini!"

A mutual recognition, which the change of garb and situation, and the effect of penitential discipline had hitherto prevented, took place at once. They had been sitting, up to this point, side by side, on the same couch. They rose,—they recoiled. There they stood, with cowls thrown back, habited alike in the same coarse, monastic vesture, and bound with the cord of St. Francis,—they who had met as the two philosophers—the Stoic and the Epi-

curean! There they stood confronting each other, two monks in appearance, bent only on working out their painful and laborious salvation; but the minds of both had deserted, as it were, their visible forms, and they were, at that moment, the Ernesto and the Zimini of the prisoner's cell,—mortal foes, the one the bereaved friend and lover, the other the murderer of Sylvester and Maddalena. Amongst many stronger emotions, Ernesto felt with repugnance and loathing this similarity which was imposed on two such deadly opponents. He recalled that vow of eternal hostility which he had made; and the feeling of revenge which had dictated it was rising high within his bosom. Zimini, on the other hand, as the more practised theologian, attempted to utter some common-place on the duty of forgiveness, and the new law of Christian fellowship which had since been established between them. But the passions of nature were too strong; his pale lips moved only as if in act of speech, whilst his eager eye was searching round the apartment for some instrument of defence or attack.

Through the wicker basket, which held the peaceful bread of the hermit, there gleamed the blade of a solitary knife. It caught at the same moment, the kindled glance of both our monks. They rushed, struggling together towards it. Ernesto

succeeded in grasping the handle, and his opponent, overbalanced, fell, at the same time, beneath him, and utterly within his power. His left hand was on the throat, and his right, as he had vowed it should, might now be busy with the heart of Zimini. But it was not in vain that Ernesto had been a Christian. He had overthrown his enemy on that homely table which had become sacred by his frequent prayers, and by the continual presence of that crucifix which was standing upon it. A religious scruple seized and upheld his arm. In an instant of time, too rapid to be measured to the eye, did his mind more than once reverse its own decrees, and more than once change the destination of that uplifted knife. Finally, lest his better resolution should be overborne, he dashed it against the wall, and broke the blade over the head of his enemy. "Go in peace!" he said.

Zimini delayed not to take advantage of this clemency, but made his rapid retreat. Ernesto sat himself down in the same posture from which he had been disturbed by the arrival of his guest, but not with the like tranquillity. Hour after hour came and went, and found the figure of the man in the same peaceful and unaltered attitude, and the mind within in the same ceaseless tumult.

After this interview, the serenity of the recluse

never returned. He strove in vain to recover his lost mood of pensive quietude. The monastic garb was shaken off; it had become odious by its participation with Zimini. His chamber had lost that character of peace, which it had gradually acquired; it was associated only with the presence of his enemy.

Our hermit is sitting on a fragment of those bare and uncouth ruins which lie around his cell. Faint with abstinence, and weary with emotion, he leans his head against the crumbling stones, and his hair, grown long in his seclusion, is moistened by the dews of evening. He is just conscious of the waves moving to and fro before him, and of the stars that are coming out on the clear firmament. His open eyes are fixed upon these objects, but yet he sees them rather in memory than in vision. The sea is continually coming and going at his feet. It seems to his languid mind that his thoughts mingle and confuse themselves with the murmur of its waves, — that they pass from him with the smooth and giddy lapse of its retreating billows.

Thus the whole night is passed. Morning returns, and he feels the milder air, and the pleasant warmth of the sun. He rises, and walks slowly along the sea-coast. His face is turned towards the city of

Naples. He has no object in his progress; but he has no motive for return. His faith itself has become languid: but what would remain to him, —what to recompose his existence,—should he discontinue to believe?

CHAPTER III.

THE MARTYR.

The devotee continued his melancholy course till he entered the city of Naples, and found himself amidst its crowded population. There was nothing in the noisy and vivacious multitude with which he could sympathise, or which sympathised with him. He did not even share in that community of spirit which supports the member of a pious fraternity. He was no priest or monk: he had no love or admiration of this order of men. He was suffering under a voluntary poverty, without claiming its honours; and had abandoned the world, without entering into the acknowledged sanctuary of its church. He stood alone, unconnected with any portion of mankind.

The representative of the wealthy and powerful family of the Adorni was wandering through the streets of Naples in obscurity and destitution. In mean and worn apparel, but with unruffled step, he passed through the throng of men, avoided by the children of gaiety, and jeered and jostled by the ruder populace. There came the languor of inanition, and the continuous pain of unalleviated disease, and still he made no effort to escape from poverty. He lay, lax and unresisting, in the hands of this grim and dismal adversary. His only strength was an unlimited endurance. They, who insulted or reviled, heard no expostulation; and they, who struck him, might repeat the unresented brutality. The high-spirited Ernesto bore the blows of common men: he received them as he would have endured the pelting of the rain, or the buffets of the wind. What to him was the sense of honour, or the quick apprehension of affront? He belonged not to society: what were men to him?

As his sufferings increased, his faith in God and immortality became more fixed and vivid. The darker his path along the earth, the brighter and more distinct his vision in the sky. Ernesto, self-sentenced to poverty, lay, as it were, at the very basement and gloomy foundation of the fabric of society; and, from this point of view, how hideous, how malproportioned, appears the social edifice!

To him the human race seemed mad, or desperately wicked. And, still, as the world was apprehended as more perverse, and alienate from reason and benevolence, still the more did his mind cling to its image of God, and its hope of heaven. Too separate from society, to feel any awe of mankind, his religious feelings burst forth without impediment or restraint. He rushed from dark avenues into the crowded thoroughfares of Naples, and called upon men to repent of their evil ways. He prayed, he wept, for the sins of the people. He denounced the wrath of Heaven; he menaced the city with terrible predictions. The multitude pushed him aside, and the feeble prophet lay trodden beneath its feet. This was Ernesto!—him whom we have seen dwelling in the cold temperature of philosophy!

Our zealot crept for refuge beyond the precincts of the city; and he was tranquil—he was happy, as, lying on the bare earth, he folded his torn cloak around his painful and emaciated limbs. Nature, at least, responded to the lone enthusiast. The air was fraught with kind messages for the ear of him whom no human voice soothed or consoled; and the love of Heaven beamed on him from the eyes of children, and dumb animals, gazing on him as they passed. The beauty of the world reported of those celestial raptures, of which it seemed the symbol.

It was not *here* that the happiness was to be found which answered to the fair promises of nature.

It is curious to remark how, at this period of his life, when the visionary seemed to be remote from all the usual influences of society, a feeling founded on one of its most artificial distinctions still manifested its presence. He had supported himself by petitioning of the poorer sort of people for a morsel of their coarsest food. And this alms had never been denied him; for the very populace who uttered their heartless jests upon the penurious stranger, did not hesitate to afford so simple a relief to a want so evident and so pressing. He was sitting one day on the outer steps of a cathedral, his forehead resting on the palm of his hand, and his mind absorbed in its many and mingled thoughts: for the world was passing in noisy procession at his feet, and strains of serene music were stealing on his ear from the sacred edifice behind him. Sitting thus, in the weeds of poverty, a passer-by naturally regarded him as a fit object for his benevolence, and dropped a silver coin into that hand which, being disengaged, lay open on his lap, as if in silent act of petitioning. Ernesto had eaten of the bread of charity, but the *money* burnt in his hand. A sudden flush came over his cheek; he would have returned the gift, but the donor was undistinguishable amidst the

crowd. In the porch of the church there hung a box to receive contributions for the poor, and here he deposited the donation.

Amongst those public denunciations to which his religious zeal had impelled him, Ernesto had especially inveighed against the hypocritical and luxurious priesthood of the Romish hierarchy. For this he was seized, incarcerated, and brought to trial as a heretic, a blasphemer, an atheist, and we know not what. Ernesto made no resistance, and no defence. They did with him as they pleased. Some difficulty was found in determining on the character and opinions of the criminal; but none, however, in deciding on his sentence. He had laboured to bring contempt upon the priesthood;—a day of festival was approaching, when the burning of a heretic would be a spectacle both gratifying and instructive to the populace;—the accused was friendless—he was poor;—they elevated him in the rank of heresy to an atheist, and condemned him to the flames.

It gives us no very exalted notion of our human nature that, while it is justly held to be a strong proof of a man's sincerity that he will die for his faith, we hear comparatively little said of that testimony which men give to their creed, who venture for its sake to put to death their fellow-men. And the present certainly was not

one of those instances which would exhibit the character of the persecutor, as corresponding, in the painful sacrifice of feeling made to his religion, with that of the martyr. A sincerity of conviction had the least possible influence over the priesthood of Naples in this "act of faith." Ernesto was brought out from his dungeon, and led away to the stake. He walked in a dismal procession of monks and of painted banners, both hideously grotesque, — the first affording, we suspect, in their moral purposes, no worse a representation of the world of evil, than was blazoned in such terrific colours on the second.

Never did martyr go to his last trial in mood so strange as Ernesto. On the one hand, the near approach of death had produced a sudden and total calm on the turbulence and ecstacy of his mind. On the other, the iniquitous and monstrous hypocrisy of which he was the victim, had created a disgust, and repelled his thoughts into channels very different from that which they had lately taken. The rapture forsook his vision, and the world was seen in the common light of day. Trains of reflection, familiar in past times, were coming back upon him. Thoughts, new and old, were mingling together; the religionist was sinking fast into the philosopher; and such subtle speculations were reviving as have no end, except in the weariness

they produce. But chiefly, his idea of God was undergoing fearful transformations. That divine Person, with whom he had held converse as man to man, was exchanged for the philosophical abstraction of an all-pervading and all-governing Mind. This Mind was being removed further and further from any similarity to the human intellect, which depends for its manifestation on the co-existing laws of an external nature; till the creative Power was receding entirely from the scope of his apprehension. The presence of God was departing from the world. Still, however, he made no effort to check that procession which was escorting him as a martyr to the stake. If he could not believe in religion, he could yet die for it. He resolved to fulfil the sternest duty that his creed could enjoin, though his faith were tottering. He asked no crown of glory; enough, if his martyrdom might palliate his want of faith—if it might prove the sincerity of his *un*belief.

At one moment the sceptic martyr was almost on the point of stopping the procession, when, on thrusting his hand within his bosom, he unthinkingly brought from beneath the folds of his cloak a sort of talisman which he had continually worn in that place. It was a lock of bright chesnut hair, curiously tied into a knot—it was the hair of Maddalena—it was that lock which the sportive

girl had fastened on the sleeve of the idiot. This little object brought with it a keen regret for that earthly happiness he had lost: it recalled to mind how joyous his life *might* have been, and how hopeless it had become! He continued to walk on in the procession. It mattered not. Better die thus, than live in the world without love or religion.

In this state of doubt and despondency he endeavoured to support himself with the reflection that an existence, useless to himself, would, at least, be sacrificed to a noble cause—that of the liberty of human thought! He hoped that the spectacle of his death would assist in disgusting his persecutors, at least those amongst the multitude, with their own blind rage, and useless inhumanity. But as he passed along the crowded streets, though there were some amongst the spectators who commiserated his youth, there was not one who disputed the justice of his sentence. Many reviled him as a criminal, and the greater part looked on as at a show. His executioners proceeded to their office with the utmost apathy. They fastened the chain around his body and the iron stake, and they piled the faggots around his limbs, with the like free and unfettered effort of their strength, as when they cut the same wood from the forest, or bound it together into bundles. The vacant populace stood

around staring at him. He felt how vain was all heroic purpose! His heart sunk utterly within him. He was deserted of God. There arose a hatred to his fellow-men. For beings such as these, what truth was there to be contended for?—what heaven to be attained?—what God to worship? The sun was setting, and he caught sight of that gorgeous radiance, which had so often excited his love and admiration,—it had lost its beauty. This globe, with its painted hemisphere, was the abode of a cursed and abandoned progeny.

In this miserable frame of mind, he heard a priest at his elbow reading aloud a forged recantation of that heresy of atheism, which *they* had so falsely attributed to him. He listened to their pious falsehoods with a smile of derision. When the recantation had been read, he was surprised to find himself liberated and surrendered to the care of a young man, habited in the garb of a sailor. This proved to be his friend Cynthio.

The poet had become sailor, and was now in command of a small vessel lying in the bay. Accident had brought him to Naples, and made him acquainted with the critical situation of Ernesto. The poet had not forgotten that munificent offer which his friend had made, but which his love of independence had compelled him to

reject, and a self-imposed gratitude, partaking of all the freedom of generosity, would now have induced him to forego life itself for the preservation of him who had desired to be his benefactor. Such a sacrifice, however, was far from being necessary. He had no sooner informed the priesthood of the real rank and affluence of their culprit, than his pardon was resolved on. The only difficulty was to preserve, at the same time, their own credit unimpaired, and from this dilemma they relieved themselves in the manner we have seen. The zealous churchmen, who had abhorred and condemned the unfriended heretic, now crowded with obsequious deference round the wealthy nobleman. Him whom they had previously denounced as the vilest of heretics, they now discovered to have been only too zealous in his piety. Cynthio, however, bore off his prize to his own vessel.

"These men were for turning the saint into an atheist," said Cynthio, as they stepped into the boat together.

"And they succeeded," was the cold and bitter reply.

CHAPTER IV.

CYNTHIO IS NO LONGER THE POET.

Cynthio had received his birth in a sea-port town, and it had been the delight of his earliest years to observe the sailors, and listen to the narratives of their voyages and adventures. To live as they did, to have a home upon the waters, and sail from land to land was the passion of his boyhood. He was not permitted, however, to indulge it, and youth and study brought with them another, and, perhaps, a more dangerous passion in its stead.

Yet the life of a mariner continued to be always a favourite subject of his imagination. In all other species of bodily labour, men work with tools, and a uniformity of action gives to the limbs the semblance of restraint, but the sailor's hands are his only tools, and his muscular efforts being bold and

varied, he grows up with the faculty of art and the freedom of nature. The alternation of severe and animated toil with long intervals of careless repose, assimilates his life to the liberty of the savage, while the necessary discipline and subordination to which he submits, reclaims him always within the pale of civilization. His frequent absence from land gives a continued novelty to the ordinary pleasures of life. He retains the simplicity of a child, while the danger that he braves on the tempestuous ocean, invests him with a bloodless heroism.

When, therefore, Cynthio left Rome with the desire of plunging into some path of existence remote as possible from that hopeless one into which the muse had led him, he reverted to this impression of his boyhood, and, going back as it were upon his road, took up his life from that point, where his track had diverged into that of the student, and, alas! — the aspirant for fame. He directed his course towards Genoa, and, arriving at that city, immediately went on board a large vessel which was lying in the harbour, prepared to sail, and waiting only for the turning of the tide. As he stepped on deck, and observed the quick eye of the captain, and the ready skill of the crew, he felt somewhat disconcerted at the novelty of his position. He realized, not without a ludicrous impression, the extreme difference between imagin-

ing a character and performing its functions, between transporting himself in fancy into the life of a mariner, and actually climbing up the rigging. He felt that to offer his services in his present inaptitude, would incur refusal or discourteous treatment. So seating himself upon a coil of ropes, and taking his lyre from a small package he had brought with him, he began to sing of naval heroes and maritime adventure. Both crew and captain pressed around him, and were delighted with his performance. Meanwhile the tide had turned, the anchor was raised, and the sails were set. Still the poet continued singing, and could observe that the captain and his men were pleasing themselves with the idea that they were taking captive the unconscious bard. Their stratagem completed his own intentions. It was soon arranged that they should teach him seamanship, and he should give them song and music in return.

"I worked hard with the men," said Cynthio, as he thus continued the narration to his friend, "and studied diligently with the captain. One voyage to the Levant was speedily followed by a second; I gained experience; I have earned promotion;—go to!—I have earned money; I have traded; and here I am master of this vessel, which shall carry you to the mouth of the Tiber, or the port of Genoa."

"Then you have quite merged the poet in the sailor?" said Ernesto.

"Quite,—quite! These hands are hard," replied Cynthio, gaily exhibiting his swarthy palms; "they have tugged at other than the cordage of a lyre. I, who used to burden the passing clouds with pensive sentiment, now ask of them only what weather they predict. I, who was wont to give a thousand utterances to the winds of Heaven, inquire only from what point of the compass they are blowing. I, who could never behold the ocean without lapsing into dreamy emotions, or wondrous speculations, now study its tides, and sound its shallows, and know it as the high road I travel on. Yes;" he continued, pacing the deck with animation, "I am no longer that commiserated mortal, whose musing gait marks him out for the mingled ridicule and compassion of all observers; who burns with a passion for applause, which renders him at once the most separated, and the most dependent of men. I belong to the multitude,—I am one of themselves. I am released from that needless necessity to distinguish myself from others, —from that pledge received by no one, to leave behind me an enduring performance in the world. I can be filled with daily life, as with daily bread: I can give *all* to death."

"Why, my dear Cynthio," said his friend, "I

trace something of the leaven of poetry even in this description of your unpoetized condition. Fear you not that the old fever of inspiration will return?"

"No: I resist, I fly from all temptation. If leaning, perchance, over the side of the vessel, and looking down on the troubled water, my mind grows troubled also with agitated thoughts, I start from the insidious posture: I find something to tug—to hawl;—a rope is thrown to me, and I am saved! Or I seize the rudder,—I grasp its handle, grown smooth by its frequent intercourse with the human palm,—and, believe me, there is a magic in its touch that brings me back instantly to the actual world of man's wants, and of man's energies. I feel my feet press firm upon the boarded deck; I look out, and around me; and my eye surveys, and my ear listens to the plain and serviceable realities of this our habitable globe."

Cynthio then gave an account of the revolutions that had taken place in the government of Genoa, since the departure of Ernesto from that city. Andrea Doria, its celebrated admiral, had, in the first place, re-established the power of France and the dominion of the Fregosi, to whose faction his own family had always been attached. Being afterwards disgusted with the conduct of Francis I.,

who had manifested neither gratitude to himself, nor consideration for the interests of his country, he had devoted himself to the nobler purpose of liberating the republic altogether from foreign control, and, as an indispensable pre-requisite, from the nearly balanced factions of the Adorni and the Fregosi. The enterprise met with the success it merited. The French troops were driven from the citadel, and a form of government established, in which those two powerful families were reduced to the obedience of citizens. Cynthio had no difficulty in persuading his friend to take up his future abode in the restored republic. "Come amongst us," he continued; "you need society,—you need it intellectually;—you have been thinking always after too isolated a fashion."

"I have, at least, sought truth," said Ernesto, "with labour, and with sincerity; and have been repulsed at every point."

"Truth," replied Cynthio, in a strain of thinking peculiar to himself; "such truth as is recognised, and has its place in the life of man, exists not as an abstraction of the intellect. It is the result of reason combined with the affections, and not unaided by the imagination; it consists of principles modified by the variety of circumstance, and limited by other and contradictory principles. The man of one idea is always in error. If the mind adopt

separately the data which society itself presents; the more consistently it reasons, the more surely will it proceed to some extreme position, which the multitude, who could not even have travelled to it, will yet be able to ridicule and expose. Thus you yourself have found that the noblest truths of morality and religion, the authority of conscience, and the immortality of the soul viewed as separate propositions of the reason, and allowed to exercise a dogmatic force upon the mind, become the greatest of our errors, and expel us from that life of which, in their due state of combination, they are the chief dignity and ornament. The truths generated by society are best found in society. They should be sought for in no unsocial mood. The reason that inquires after them ought to be accompanied by the happy affections of our nature. The total man should move.

"It appears to me," continued Cynthio, "that in your earliest period of reflection, your mind received a wrench from its place in society. The friendships you have formed have been few, and those interrupted by absence, or abruptly terminated by death. Your intercourse with the world has never engaged you in any of its continued and strenuous purposes. You have been deprived, therefore, of those steady influences, scarcely perceptible from the very constancy of their ope-

ration, — which social life exercises over our judgments; influences which combine and harmonize the varied materials of human thought,—which enable us to believe in Heaven, yet enjoy earth,—to own the power of conscience, yet pursue with vigour our several schemes of happiness,—to feel our individuality of being, yet recognise ourselves as a part only in the great organization of society. If you have obtained a truth, you have run with it into solitude. Involve yourself in life, and faith will return."

"All this may be correct," said Ernesto; "but if we thus mingle the affections of our nature with our laws of belief, we deprive truth of its character of independent existence, and degrade it into what I have been accustomed to honour with the name only of opinion."

"Or rather," rejoined Cynthio, "it is by abstracting truth from the social affections, from the wants and tendencies of *life*, that we reduce it to that useless shadow—an opinion. But," he added with a smile, "I, who am part sailor and part merchant, am talking widely out of character. Come to Genoa. Take your seat in the senate, as your birth entitles you, and mingle in the transactions of public life."

"That will I do," replied Ernesto. "Yes!" he exclaimed, in a tone of desperation that augured

ill of his future career. "I will break through the prison of my own thoughts. I will throw my mind abroad upon society. I will live *in* it, and be *of* it. It shall mould my wants, and authorise my passions, and bear my conscience. I will no longer support the tedious and fearful burden of this separate and individualized existence. I will *herd* it with the rest!"

After a cruize in the Mediterranean, which had restored his health, impaired by too rigid an abstinence, Ernesto landed at the mouth of the Tiber, and proceeded to his old residence. His mundane affairs, as will be readily imagined, had been utterly neglected by the devotee, and many arrangements were necessary before he could transfer his abode to Genoa. The friends parted for a short time.

As Cynthio sailed along the sea-coast, he could not avoid landing on that spot which had been the scene of his friend's religious seclusion. On entering the dark and deserted apartment, he beheld the monastic vest lying, as it had been thrown down, in the centre of the floor. The crucifix, which stood untouched on that scanty table, and the Latin bible, that lay open and abandoned before it, were objects which excited many reflections in his mind, belonging neither to the character of the sailor or the merchant. When

about to quit this spot, he observed a group of the peasantry kneeling at a respectful distance, and intently occupied in prayer. He approached them, and inquired the peculiar cause of their devotions.

It seemed that the peasant, whose office it had been to supply the vegetable diet of the anchorite, and to replenish his vessel of spring-water, finding that the provisions he brought were not consumed, and prepared to expect all manner of wonders from the saintly person to whom he administered, believed and gave it out that the holy hermit was living altogether without food. At length, as he never, by any chance, encountered the recluse, either in his apartment, or amongst the ruins which surrounded it, he began to conjecture that he might be no longer a tenant of the place. But this discovery, instead of explaining the first miracle, only added a second; and it was now reported that, after having lived for some time, sustained only by his pious meditations, the hermit had been translated into heaven. There were some who had seen the chariot of fire in which he had ascended. And now this group of peasants had come on a kind of pilgrimage to a spot, rendered sacred by the habitation of so great and so fortunate a saint. If we are not misinformed, there is still a legend current in those parts, of a certain St. Ernestus, of whom these and other miraculous events are piously believed.

Cynthio endeavoured to assure them that the object of their adoration was alive, and that he had just parted from him. "Another miracle!" they cried. The saint had again appeared upon the earth! So easy is the belief of a wonder-loving multitude!

CHAPTER V.

ERNESTO PREPARES TO RE-ENTER LIFE.

MEANWHILE, he who had thus added an article to the historical creed of his country, was preparing to re-enter life with heart vacant and deprived of all religious faith. To contemn and depreciate the world had been to our devotee no new or difficult attainment. It was the hope of Heaven which had come slowly, had been held with precarious tenure, and had at length utterly abandoned him. He continued to contemn earth *without* the hope of Heaven. Ernesto took measures to have his name enrolled amongst the senators of Genoa, and in order to increase his influence in that government, he exchanged such estates as he possessed in the principality of the church, for others in the territory of the republic. He reserved to himself, however, that old palace and garden to which he

was attached, by a multitude of associations. Indeed, so strongly did the recollections connected with the loss of Maddalena affect his mind, that the longer he remained in that place, the more difficulty did he find in quitting it. When all his preparatory measures had been completed, he still lingered on from day to day, unable to break loose from those regrets which, however mournful, were yet the only source that remained to him of pure and happy sentiment.

This irresolution was finally overcome by no less an event than the memorable siege and capture of Rome, by the Constable Bourbon. Driven by the impolitic behaviour of Francis I., from allegiance to his native sovereign, and ill supported by the Emperor Charles V., to whom he had transferred his homage, the Constable was now at the head of a destitute, undisciplined army, kept together only by the hopes of plunder. Famine and their sanguinary passions led them on; and Bourbon possessed, indeed, the power of selecting the town of Italy on which the mischief should be discharged, but we doubt whether he could have put a stop to their ruinous career. In appearance their leader, he was in reality borne onwards (like their standard in the front) by the tumultuous will of his followers. Clement, the Pope, cajoled or infatuated, encouraged the people of Rome up to the latest moment

in their proud confidence that the "eternal city" was safe from this horde of barbarians; nor was it till the assault was actually commenced that the inhabitants were generally awake to the danger that threatened them.

Ernesto was amongst the number of those who had listened to the rumours of alarm with carelessness or incredulity. The cries of terror, and the sounds of war pierced the gloomy retirement of the palace, and startled him from his reverie. Arming himself in haste, he ran to the walls to partake the labour of their defence. A body of Swiss mercenaries was still making a vigorous but unequal resistance. The Constable himself had planted a scaling ladder with his own hands, and in the attempt to ascend, had received a mortal wound. He now lay dead in the trenches, but the multitude of his followers, adding the passion of revenge to those which formerly stimulated them, had only advanced with greater ardour. They now rushed in irresistible numbers upon the walls.

The besieging army, if army it might be called, was composed of men of all nations and of all creeds. There were, therefore, many Germans amongst them, who disgraced by their ignorant and furious bigotry the name of Protestants. Fanatic zeal added its peculiar and disgustful horror to the scene; and amongst the shouts which

animated the assault and the ensuing carnage, there arose a yell of "Babylon is fallen!—is fallen!" The utterers of this dismal cry waved torches in the air, which threatened the conflagration of the idolatrous city; and called with furious denunciations for the life of the Pope. One, in medley garb, half ecclesiastical and half military, was distinguished above all others for the zeal with which he entered on the work of destruction. He raised his weapon, dyed in blood, and called on the city to repent. Borne along by his own sanguinary rage, he was proclaiming the triumph of purity of faith. "Spare not! spare not!—it is the cause of God! Slay! Oh, slay!—it is the victory of Christ!" With such words in his mouth, and accompanying them with no unsuitable actions, this champion of a *creed* crossed the path of Ernesto, and appeared immediately to single him out for mortal combat. But the adversary whom the zealot had selected was skilful and self-possessed, and the well-directed weapon of Ernesto pierced him to the heart. The prostrate fanatic turned his eyes towards Heaven with look that claimed and anticipated the reward of martyrdom; but those eyes, ardent as they were with hope, were suddenly abashed, and closed, as if in fear of agony, when they met the downward gaze of Ernesto. The Protestant zealot was the murderer Zimini!

Occupied with a restless anxiety to determine what exactly should be *believed*, he had from a Roman Catholic inquisitor, become a convert to the Lutheran faith. But this bad-hearted man disgraced every tenet and every doctrine that he held; and as philosophy could teach him only to assassinate, so religion could instruct him only in persecution. Converted from his former vices, he certainly had been; but it were better, perhaps, that such men should continue to plague the world as villains, than begin to torment it as fanatics.

Little time was allowed to Ernesto, to make reflections of this or of any other nature, for the city was now in the hands of its infuriated assailants. Taking horse, he joined the crowd of flying inhabitants, who were making their escape by an opposite quarter to that by which the enemy had entered. As he was carried forward in the mingled tide of flight and pursuit, he beheld the avaricious Buondelmonte seized and carried off by the foremost of the plunderers. The miserable man had embarrassed his flight by burdening himself with a quantity of gold, which, if lost, would have diminished but little from his wealth. That his ransom and not his life would be the object of his captors, Ernesto was well aware; but he knew also, that Buondelmonte would die many deaths in parting with his gold. He heard his pitiable cries, and,

notwithstanding the contempt with which he surveyed the *miser*, he exerted his utmost efforts to rescue the father of Maddalena; but it was impossible even to extricate himself from this moving and tumultuous mass of human beings, which eventually carried him through the gates of the city, and accompanied him some distance on his road to Genoa.

On slackening his pace, Ernesto perceived that a squat, diminutive fellow, singularly ugly, had contrived to escape the presence of the crowd, by perching himself upon the crupper of his horse. The rogue held within both his arms, and pressed with fondness to his bosom, a large golden chalice, more revered, it was evident, for the value of the metal than the sacredness of its destination. No sooner was his presence discovered, than he leaped with surprising agility, not upon the ground, but high into the air, alighting with his feet upon the back of the horse, and standing behind Ernesto with many antics and grimaces. It will not be suspected that Ernesto was disposed to make part of so ludicrous an exhibition as they now presented; he ordered him to dismount; but the imp, seating himself cross-legged upon the hind-quarters of the horse, threw so comic an expression into his countenance, that Ernesto found it difficult to preserve the gravity of his own. All this while

he continued to press the golden chalice in his arms, and to cast on it, from time to time, a look of arch endearment.

"Sacrilegious thief!" said Ernesto. "Have you no conscience of any kind whatever? Does no remorse follow you?"

"Follow!" was the reply, after some pause, as if the question had not at first been fully understood. "Oh, no! he cannot follow. We knocked the old priest down,—he is dead."

Of a truth, this worthy individual had completely succeeded in doing that which Ernesto had only resolved on, and which, with Ernesto, could be nothing more than a momentary resolve;—he had surrendered his mind to society, to be moulded and shaped by the current of events; or rather, he had never considered that he had a mind so to surrender. Pleasure he loved, and pain he hated; but on the being who enjoyed or suffered, he never had wasted a reflection: he had no *self*, though abundance of *selfishness*. In this he was the extreme opposite of our reflective hero, and the contrast had probably invested the intruder with a certain species of interest. He bore the name of Stesso, which was, in fact, a part only of some longer appellation, the residue of which had been forgotten by its owner.

"The rogue, at least, is happy," thought

Ernesto; and obtaining a second horse, he engaged him in his service.

"When you rob me, Stesso, be content with stealing the chalice."

Stesso grinned from ear to ear, as he explained that his master was not an infirm, old priest, who might so easily be knocked down as well as pillaged.

We congratulate ourselves that the course of our narrative has so speedily disengaged us from the confusion and terror which prevailed at this time in the city of Rome. Scenes of this description have so frequently occupied the rhetoric of the historian, that the disgust of repetition is added to the natural odiousness of the subject. We return to the besieged city, only to particularize the fate of one whom certainly no historian but ourselves has condescended to mention. Though the walls had been assaulted, scaled, and taken, and the whole town was over-run with its ruthless and devastating conquerors, Piccolomente was lying in total unconcern, basking in the sunshine, and gazing on his flowers. A number of the besiegers, joined by many of the rabble of the town, glad to mingle themselves, for the sake of plunder, with its assailants, rushed towards the palace of the Adorni. To this edifice they had been especially guided, by a belief, at one time

not without foundation, that a treasure lay concealed within its walls. They ransacked every part of that vacant palace, and rushed, like a torrent, into that quiet garden, whose tranquil precincts had hitherto been disturbed only by the troubled reflections of their pensive proprietor. Everywhere they sought for treasure, and everywhere were disappointed. At length they came to that spot where the idiot lay outstretched before the mouth of his grotto. Here, they thought, must be the hidden treasure, and they hastened to seize it. The idiot rose, and extended his arms in a vain effort to repulse them. They thrust him through, they clove him to the earth. They imagined him the protector of hoarded gold;—the poor fool was thinking only of his flowers!—Thus lived and died Piccolomente, the idiot.

BOOK IV.

THE CONSPIRATOR.

"If dead we cease to be—
  Oh, Man! thou vessel purposeless, unmeant,
Yet drone-hive strange of phantom purposes!
  Surplus of nature's dread activity,
Which, as she gazed on some nigh-finished vase,
Retreating slow with meditative pause,
  She formed with restless hands unconsciously!
Blank accident! nothing's anomaly!
Go, weigh thy dreams, and be thy hopes, thy fears,
  The counter-weights!—
Be sad! be glad! be neither! seek or shun!
Thou hast no reason why! thou canst have none:
Thy being's being is contradiction."

COLERIDGE.

CHAPTER I.

STATE OF AFFAIRS IN GENOA—CORNELIUS, THE UTOPIAN—ERNESTO IS ENTERING ON THE ARENA OF AMBITION.

Some months after the arrival and re-establishment of Ernesto in Genoa, three young men, of very different garb and character, were standing or parading together in a clear and retired space on the quay of that city. He who was most distinguished amongst them, by his gay and fashionable attire, and his easy, negligent air, was our old acquaintance, Francesco Colonna. His history we must briefly resume.

We left Francesco consoled for the loss of his friend, by the reflection that he had, at the same time, been delivered from the presence of his rival. When he next made his appearance, however, at the house of the "charming Persian," he was denied admittance. Nor was he able even to obtain a sight of Viola, although his attendance upon

mass, and upon all places of public resort, was for this purpose unremitting. He was thus deprived both of his friend and of the object of his amorous pursuit. But the regrets of Francesco were not eternal. His friendships were the result of the immediate and hourly circumstances of life, and lasted little longer than the occasions which gave them birth. His feelings rose, and their currents were supplied from no living fountains in the mind itself, but might be compared to those waters which the daily tide leaves upon the shore, and which we see flowing back again, in imitative streamlets, through the sand.

In an hour unusually vacant, the listless Francesco bethought him that, of all the remedies against ennui, he had never yet made experiment of matrimony. It occured to him quite forcibly, that he had been a bachelor all his life: so, adjusting his cloak into its most graceful folds, and his mustachios into their most approved curvature, he sallied forth with resolution to make trial of this last variety of existence. Now, there was a young damsel, possessed of suitable dowry, whose personal attractions all the world acknowledged, but whom all the world, with the same unanimity of opinion, pronounced to be of a shrewish, unmanageable temper. That the pretty shrew should *not* be his elected bride, was almost the only de-

termination he had formed, when he set forth upon his bold adventure. By some perverse chance, he encountered this damsel. He saw reason, again and again, to congratulate himself on that prudent forethought which had preserved him from the snares of so brilliant a complexion, and of glances so expressive. But whilst he was thus commending his own sagacity, his eye was, at least, as busy as his mind; and, in the very act of inwardly protesting that he would *not*,—he found himself a kneeling suitor at her feet,—her proffered and accepted lover. Francesco was now settled down, the married man, at Genoa.

Another of this group was habited in the succinct garb of the naval officer. This was Cynthio, the poet-sailor, who was now bent on an expedition to the new-discovered continent of America. He had embarked all his lately acquired fortune in the purchase and equipment of a noble vessel, which was riding in the harbour, and waiting only for a favourable wind to bear him on what, in those times, was considered a hazardous and romantic adventure.

The third, and last of the party, attired in the scholar's black, though not by reason of the scholar's poverty, was one whom we have to introduce, for the first time, to our readers. Cornelius (for, according to the learned fashion of those days, he

had thus Latinized his name of Cornelio,) was a youth of good family, devoted to letters and philosophy. One predominant idea had so entirely engrossed the student of man and of society, as to press into its service every other thought, and blend itself with all his sentiments. This was the practicability, and necessity to human happiness, of some new scheme of social organization; one in which the anxious toil, and selfish proprietorship, that have hitherto prevailed, should be superseded by united efforts, and a community of possession. How much evil was to be banished, and how much good introduced, by this exchange, it were long to tell: we must leave each reader to frame for himself his ideal of human perfection. As to Cornelius, it was in the future destinies of society that he beheld the benevolence of God finally established and displayed. His Utopia was to him what the belief of immortality is to the greater number of speculative minds; and, indeed, his faith in its realization had become so complicated with all his moral and religious feelings, that an abandonment of it would have left him a worse man, though probably a better reasoner.

This faith in the happy prospects of the world was, in him, of no sudden or capricious growth. It had been adopted after much hesitation, and held, at first with feelings of distrust and insecurity.

The tremulous splendours of his earthly Elysium seemed ever ready to fade away. Baffled and perplexed by that complication of contradictory principles which human life presented to his view, he would sometimes relinquish, in despair, his task of reforming mankind by re-organising society. When, at these moments, he paused from his labours, he felt consoled and relieved at the very simple reflection, that, in truth, the responsibility of the world's happiness rested not on him. But the philanthropist soon returned to his Atlantean task. He could not see a beggar in the streets, but he reverted to his schemes for removing poverty altogether from the earth. The Protestant Reformation, which began to extend its excitement into Italy, and the invention of the printing-press, —the importance of which, this religious revolution had then fully revealed,—were events that daily kindled the political visionary. Scenes of human perfection, which, in the earliest attempts of his prophetic spirit, had been laid in remote eras of time, were approximated nearer and nearer to the period in which he lived; till, at length, it seemed that the curtain was already about to rise, and a new drama of existence to commence.

Enthusiastic as were the views of Cornelius, his temper and deportment were mild and retiring. His life had been passed in study. It was a gentle

and affectionate heart that had gone forth in these political abstractions: it was a mind possessed of no ordinary powers of reasoning that had arrived at conclusions which will generally be pronounced extravagant and irrational. He was still young, but his days on earth were evidently numbered. On the pale cheek of the tall, attenuated, and thought-o'erwearied student, there played the hectic flush of consumptive fever. It was manifest to every observer, and was not hidden from himself, that he could not long be an inhabitant of that world he was so anxious to reform.

"These politics!" Francesco might have been overheard to say with some impatience, "I am weary of them. Always the republic! Oh for the good days of the tyranny again! Then was there mirth in our streets, and gaiety in our court. Ernesto himself has come back to us, the grave and formal senator. So at least the outer man would signify;—what he is at heart has always passed my skill to scrutinize. Were it not for the Count Fiesco, we should utterly stagnate."

"No fear that he will suffer you to sink into too deep a repose," observed Cynthio.

"What would you imply?" questioned at once both of his companions.

"—That if the republic cannot preserve its

liberties, it may lose them as well to Fiesco as to another."

"Liberties!" said the politician with disdain.

"To Fiesco!" cried the man of pleasure with astonishment, "Fiesco! the most unambitious of men,—the very prince of idlers,—the most charming of profligates. There is not a member of the 'four hundred' who mixes less in our politics. Have not the Dorias chosen him into the council of 'eight,' well knowing that the vivacious Count would give them little disturbance? I have heard him swear that he would sooner be a page, and hold his mistress' fan, than sit for two whole years in the Doge's chair:—he could not sleep, he said, for so long a time at once."

"I did not accuse him of too great a partiality for the chair of the republic," replied Cynthio.

"You do him great injustice," said Cornelius, "Fiesco is not the idler our friend describes him, nor is he, as you would insinuate, the man of selfish ambition. He has no wish, as I fear, the Dorias have, to add a few steps to the Doge's chair, and convert it into a throne. He is a bold and philosophic patriot. He thinks with me, that what are called the liberties of the republic, are but in fact the privileges of the nobles. He is desirous of elevating the people to their due share

of political power, persuaded that this is the first and essential step towards improving the condition and elevating the character of mankind."

"It is evident that I am not in the Count's confidence," replied Cynthio. "But I would gladly know what advantage Genoa is to obtain from the patriotism of Fiesco, which is to obliterate the merits of Andrea Doria? We see a country liberated from foreign oppression, we see equal laws established, and political power placed in such hands as to secure it alike from the ambition of the highest, and the disobedience of the lowest of the people. What more, Cornelius, do you desire from government?"

"I should use the same language, Cynthio, as yourself, if I thought no effort were due from us to advance the destinies of man. Are beings endowed with reason, to rest content with no better plan of society than that which has sprung up out of the first rude passions of their nature? Equal laws! Impartial justice between rich and poor! But what law is that, and what justice, which has established the distinction between rich and poor? Our present institution of property shall not always, with its prodigality on the one hand, and its cruelty on the other, condemn the mind of man, either to the tuition of the most frivolous desires, or to the tyranny of the lowest wants. Men cannot indeed

be all equal, but they may be all equally provided with the means of pleasurable subsistence, and of moral cultivation. Hitherto mankind have hardly been worthy of the name of social beings, so little have they consulted the good of the whole in the compact of society."

"And do you seriously expect," said Cynthio, "that the labours of life will ever be carried on by a motive so abstract and refined, as that of the universal good? Why even that mental culture which is to lead to so novel a condition of humanity, cannot be transmitted from one age to another, unless the same efforts are used to maintain it, as were first employed to acquire. If the mind is not stimulated, it will be indolent; if indolent it will soon be ignorant; and indolence and ignorance form a good definition of that barbarism to which your scheme would reconduct us."

"It is true," replied Cornelius, "of savages and of men little better than savages, that they require an immediate and selfish stimulant to exertion; but it is the undoubted privilege of reasonable beings to labour for remote advantages and indirect results; and in proportion as the reason of man is cultivated, does prospective wisdom take the place of craving appetite, or the impulse of passion. It cannot be the permanent condition of an intelligent race of beings, that it should be goaded

to that industry, which is essential to its welfare, by harsh and peremptory want. I sincerely believe, that the day is not far distant, when society shall recognise as its fundamental principle the equality of men;—when the labours subservient to the preservation or enjoyment of life shall be partaken by all, and for the benefit of all;—when a social organization shall be adopted, as much the result of the general reason, as the present is manifestly the growth of the undirected passions of mankind."

"But," interposed the wondering Francesco, "if all are to be equal to whom are to be allotted the severer and more irksome labours?—who is to dig in the quarry, or to build those houses which are to be erected for the accommodation of the community?"

"You yourself," replied the unhesitating Utopian, "would have no reluctance to take the axe, and hew the stone from out the quarry, or with your own hands to help in rearing the scaffold, and hoisting the block of granite to its place in the rising structure, if the absurd and degrading associations connected with such toils were removed, and you were labouring with companions, educated like yourself. Labour is not itself an evil. Activity and a customary task are found agreeable to the happiness of man. They will not be less so, because

adopted from reflection. Nor is the practice of a useful art incongruous with mental culture, or true dignity of character. A Greek philosopher would have contended that slaves formed an essential class in every community of men, for he deemed that the exercise of any handicraft was incompatible with the spirit of liberty. We have seen republics in our day wherein the martial aristocrats were compelled to enrol themselves amongst the trades, before they could obtain the rank and privilege of citizens. As we are now persuaded that the labours of the artisan are not incompatible with a free spirit, so a future generation will be convinced that they can be combined with the highest state of mental cultivation, or the most refined species of social intercourse. Trust me the *inevitable* distinction of rich and poor, will share the fate of the *indispensable* relationship of master and slave."

"If there were a community of goods," persisted Francesco, "I am convinced you must make a great number of us work by compulsion, like the galley-slaves. You must starve men into industry; and this is only the exchange of a natural poverty for one created by the laws. But granting that your happiest visions could be realised, how is the equalization of mankind to be brought about? What insinuating argument, or what sudden bene-

volence is to unloose the tenacious grasp of the man of wealth? Or is your amiable condition of society to be the result of a servile war, and the victory of the paupers to prove the triumph of philanthropy? What are your means, Cornelius?"

"Education!"

"But who is to educate?—Education does not necessarily teach a community of goods."

"It necessarily brings a community of *ideas*, which is nearer to it than you imagine. Equality of knowledge conducts to equality of *power*, and this again to equality of *possession*. I do not expect that a community of goods will be a favourite doctrine in the schools of the rich: it is by establishing a real equality of power between rich and poor, that education will be the means of introducing a new era of society. A fresh division of labour, and the fruits of labour must be submitted to; the soil of the *earth* will be reclaimed as the property of *man*; and the machinery of life regulated for the happiness of all."

Francesco was about to answer, when the discussion was interrupted by the arrival of one with whom all the party claimed some degree of intimacy, and with whom we trust our readers are not yet entirely wearied. Driven, as it seemed to him, from love, philosophy, and religion, Ernesto had entered quite mechanically on the duties of a sena-

tor of the republic. If *faith* without *life* had ended, as we have seen, in so fearful a disappointment; *life* without *faith* threatened to be equally disastrous.

The senator had lately been excited from his state of morbid and universal indifference, and stung into something of political rivalry, by the arrogant pretensions and insolent demeanour of Giannetino Doria, who, under the weak indulgence of his uncle, the admiral, was suspected of aspiring to the supreme dominion. Now there was another individual in the city of Genoa, who, in the language of olden times, aimed at the tyranny, and with temper and talents far more fitted to the task than the overbearing, but weak and presumptuous Giannetino. Count Fiesco was young, wealthy, brave, and enterprising, one whose great possessions and diversified abilities were steadily devoted to the never-forgotten object of his own aggrandizement. He exercised a princely munificence—but his liberality purchased adherents; he was gay, courteous, and of festive demeanour,—but his levities concealed the intrigues of the conspirator. To Francesco, we have seen he was the man of pleasure; to Cornelius the politician and philanthropist. He, too, could deal in reasonings, but every principle of thought, as well as every action of his life was in undisputed subserviency to an as-

piring ambition. If the measures he took to advance himself to power, were criminal in the extreme, it must yet be remembered that they were such as in his age were more frequently resorted to, and therefore less severely reprobated than in the present times.

This man had not failed to observe Ernesto, and to watch with interest a growing animosity between the representative of the house of the Adorni and his rival, Giannetino. Sounding his way, he had gradually explained his own ambitious projects, and unfolded that conspiracy which he was then organizing for their accomplishment. At the intimation of his bold and unscrupulous designs, the hearer had betrayed none of that repugnance which a mind uninjured and open to the natural feelings of humanity would have discovered; and the conspirator had, therefore, proceeded to invite him, as one who participated equally with himself in hatred to the Dorias, to share both in the danger and the rewards of his enterprise. Ernesto had, indeed, listened to his projects, but he had entertained no serious intention of joining a plot for the assassination of some of the principal nobles of the state, however dignified by the name of ambition. Still, he had *listened.*

" Our senator looks disturbed," said Francesco,

as he now approached them. "I marvel what has displeased the statesman?"

"Now Heaven forbid," replied Ernesto, "that any annoyance a coxcomb can inflict should have left a durable impression on my countenance! And yet I *am* vexed and nettled that so much folly and arrogance as meet in Giannetino Doria should bear rule in Genoa. Better far if the admiral had seized himself on the supreme power, than labour now to establish it in the person of his nephew. But truce to this. I observed that you were in earnest colloquy when I arrived; if my presence interferes not, pray let the subject be resumed."

CHAPTER II.

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUED.

"Our philosopher here," said Francesco, "who holds that the world is still in a most rude and lamentable state, is labouring with extreme benignity to restore us to right reason, and a tolerable state of existence. Pity Cornelius cannot get employment in world-architecture! But Jupiter seems to have given over building."

"Yes," resumed the philanthropist, "in spite of the raillery of Francesco, I do believe that we are rapidly advancing to a state of society altogether different from any which mankind has hitherto exhibited. All things are *not* as they have been. There is a new agent in the world,—the printing-press,—this latest and most glorious gift from the material to the mental world. Oh, it is as if the trumpet of an archangel were put to the

trembling lips of neglected Truth, wherewith to summon the nations to a new era of reason and of happiness! Knowledge being extended throughout society, humanity shall arise and overlook itself, even as one man overlooks his own being, and shall readjust its affairs for an all-embracing and continuous felicity. Both want and superfluity shall be banished from the earth; the highest culture of the mind shall be combined with the simplest labours of the hand; all shall be active, cultivated, happy."

"I am told," he continued, "that such a social state, if once realised, could not possibly endure, as no sufficient stimulant would be provided for the industry of men, who thus would sink back again to their first rude condition of sloth and barbarity. To this I answer, and am content to abide by this answer—that the moral force of that public opinion which would accompany such a social state, would compensate for the diminished power of the selfish motives. An industry (not oppressive, but assistant to the cultivation of the mind) would be recognised as a prominent virtue in its code of morals; and who would not court a pleasurable activity when society was prepared to visit with its severe censure the languor of sloth? Of course, it is not in this direction only that a public opinion, enlightened by the spread of intelligence, *and made unanimous by a*

unity of interest, would operate with beneficial influence. In all that concerns the happiness of man, the will of the individual would be brought into harmony with the welfare of the community. To crown the whole, there would prevail a sense of voluntary allegiance and cheerful gratitude to the intellectual Ruler of the universe, whose wisdom and benevolence would then have become truly conspicuous, and sincerely acknowledged.

" It seems," said Francesco, " to be a stirring employment to frame Utopias; I suspect, however, that it would be wearisome in the extreme to live in them. After all, they present nothing to my imagination but a Dutch family group eternally repeated, wherein the implements of housewifery, and the utensils of the kitchen form the sole accessories in the picture. We are all to be employed in feeding, clothing, and teaching one another. But why, Cynthio, do you suffer me to bear alone the brunt of this contest? You, who carry about philosophy in ambuscade, and hide it under the garb and aspect of the naval officer, do you discourse upon these matters. Let us hear you once more philosophise upon human life before you leave us for the new discovered land of America—before you go to chase the buffalo with the red Diana of yonder savage woods. What think you of our friend's Utopia?"

" I have already said," replied Cynthio, " that in the imaginary system of Cornelius, the mind would, I believe, sink into torpor,—its faculties would stagnate,—its noblest sentiments would become inert, or cease to exist. To that substitution which he proposes of the social and moral affections for our selfish impulses, there is a limit, and one which may soon be reached; for the former cannot, in fact, exist without the latter. A state of society which should discourage the selfish propensities, would soon prove fatal to all the higher developments of our nature. You must first excite in the individual an interest for his own welfare, else, how shall he be concerned for that of the community to which he belongs,—how take an interest in the questions of morality, whether these more immediately relate to himself or others? As surely as the flower is connected with the stem, and the stem with the ungainly root; so surely are the highest manifestations of humanity connected with its desires the most simple, and its wants the least attractive.

" One and the same fallacy runs through all speculations of this nature. In his new constitution of society, the Utopian calculates on the continuance of feelings which belong essentially to the condition of things he is anxious to supersede. Morality—religion—patriotism, or the social enthusiasm ani-

mating a body of men, — all these sentiments require for their existence that antagonism between the individual mind and society, or between the several portions of mankind, which it is the object of those who labour at ideal perfection to remove.

"The moral sentiment may be rudely defined to be a voluntary adoption of the opinion of society, in opposition to some more personal inclination of our own. It presupposes a *self*, viewed as distinct from, and in partial conflict with the world. It implies restraint and sacrifice. Were there a complete harmony between the individual mind and society, it is plain that no such sentiment could be generated.

"Religion (besides that this, in the only form it is valuable, is an outgrowth of the moral sentiment,) requires manifestly the same partial conflict and collision with the world for its development. The existence of an intellectual Creator of the universe, (granting it to be demonstrated, and not to require for its belief a conjoint effort of the reason and the imagination,) is still only an article of natural philosophy: it is the implication of human passions with this belief which renders it religion. And to what extent would this occur, if men found in society all that they expect from God? What would have induced the mind to travel out of the

circle of human fellowship that surrounded it, if all within that circle had been harmony and peace? The reference of our actions to the approval of the Invisible is an appeal from the injustice or blindness of mankind. The *church* cannot live but in the *world*. Say not Cornelius, that your happy community would at least look up with gratitude to the Creator of *life*,—how know you, but that creatures so content with their existence would not rather look with reproach upon the author of *death?*

"And lastly, patriotism or that social spirit which is known to combine and inspire a body of men acting together under common interests or prejudices, cannot long be sustained but by the rivalry or opposition of some other body, or of the surrounding multitude of mankind. The very spirit which you would call upon to unite the race, as one family, exists only by its separation into many. Philanthropy may animate the single bosom; it cannot take the place and perform the functions of patriotism—of social enthusiasm.

"The world is a finished whole; its evil and its good are one. Behold how complicate are all things — how mutually involved! Our dearest affections are moulded of pain and sorrow; decay and fragility complete the charm of the beautiful; and sublimity falls on us with the shadow of great

terrors. It is desire still unsatisfied that begets hope never wearied, and activity always happy. To death and the dark futurity beyond, we chiefly owe whatever is heroic in deed or in reflection. A blind spirit of love has wrought, we may conceive, with beautiful idea upon chaotic elements and conflicting laws.

"You cannot, Cornelius, make your choice of the materials of this our world to reconstruct a new one. Yet I am not without sympathy in a hopeful view of the future. You may have observed how a skilful artist, now defacing and now again renewing, proceeds by touches difficult to appreciate, to soften, and improve the features of some portrait, which still retains, however, its first resemblance. Just such an artist, I imagine, is Time. If we have little to hope from his labours, we have at least nothing to fear."

Ernesto, who had been standing in silence beside them, but who had evidently been revolving the subject after his own fashion, now broke forth.

"Oh, let us be *men!* Let the world be stormy, as of old, and let us struggle through it as we may. Not in the abstractions of thought,—not in the mechanism of an animal existence,—but in the strong feelings of the heart, man seeks pre-eminently to live. We cannot pass along the earth in the manner of the gods, with our feet for ever in the soft

and yielding air of speculation; nor can we crawl a slow and wormy way, in familiar and perpetual contact with its soil; it is in the griffin-speed of passion, half in air, and half on earth, that the soul of man delights. Away, then, with all this *hiving* of the species! You construct a society, Cornelius, and you lose sight of the man. Where is his liberty? where his chosen field of action? Morality, virtue, public good:—excellent names!—but if too often repeated, the ear will tire of them, and the spirit break away, and re-assert her freedom.

"What is this new and wonder-working agent, which has excited in the mind of our friend such strange anticipations? What can he hope from an engine which lends itself impartially to every error and every passion under the sun? Your arch-angel's trumpet, Cornelius, may be put to the lips of any villain in the land. Or, how can you expect (and this it behoves you more especially to consider,) that your meditated change in the constitution of civil society can be effected by the printing-press, which gives its aid as powerfully to the prejudices of wealth as to the complaints of poverty, and scatters the same contrariety of opinion amongst all classes of men? Were I disposed to prophesy, I would say that the influence of riches would rather be increased and secured by

this new invention; for wealth must always be, under some form, the steady patron of letters. Every passion may write, but money only can purchase. Printing, however, is but a species of loud talking; and how this is to save or shake the world, I am at a loss to imagine. Of truths disputed, it can but enlarge the circle of contention, and transfer the question, on which ten men could not agree, to the conflicting judgments of ten thousand. And of truths acknowledged, and in the exclusive possession of the educated, which are they,—I should rejoice to be told them,—whose wider dissemination amongst the multitude is to reform, ameliorate, and ennoble the human race? I, for my part, would rather be the simple peasant, who sticks his lighted candle before the image of a saint, and then retires, unburdened both of his sin and of his penitence,—would rather be the dull polemic of theology, who pertinaciously mingles, with a life the most homely, active, and worldly-minded, a creed the most mystical and rapturous —would rather be such as these, than the pupil of a feeble, hesitating philosophy, whose very boast is, that she is ignorant, and whose best teaching is but a very luminous uncertainty.

"Or, what egregious good is it that Cornelius anticipates from the moral influence of an enlightened public opinion, on which I hear him so fre-

quently dilate? Doubtless, the morality of each individual is formed by the judgment of his fellow-creatures; but, be it remembered, that on the judgment-seat of public opinion are placed men of like passions with himself. He stands not alone in his faulty propensities. There will be always, amongst his judges, those who are more disposed to take the same license as himself, than to support his sinking virtue by the rigid impartiality of their verdict. Men are thus, according to their several interests or passions, divided into sections, and different judgments pass from the tribunal of public opinion. In other words, there are many public opinions. How can morality be perfected, while the same being is both to judge, and to *be* judged? Can any addition to the *intelligence* of men, cure this radical defect,—if defect it be,—in the court of public opinion? Or can any conceivable alteration in the structure of society, render a multitude unanimous, who must, at least, be divided by differences of age, sex, temper, and habitual pursuit?

"There is no new thing for reason to perform. It can introduce into the world no fresh objects of desire; and cultivated beyond a certain point, it destroys those impulses which it ought only to have controlled. Life is the same now as in the days of old. The lamentations of the Grecian, or the Hebrew bard,—you may hear the like from

common mouths in the streets of Genoa. The ark of humanity floats upon waters that never can subside;—it hulls upon the waves, and the tide bears it hither and thither, to and fro, it matters little in what direction."

Thus it was that each speaker criticised the Utopian scheme of Cornelius, according to his peculiar temper or mode of thinking. Francesco derived too much of his enjoyment from the distinctions of rank and wealth, to look with any complacency upon their projected abolition. Cynthio took occasion to discourse upon his favourite theme,—the intimate connection which exists between the truths, the passions, the circumstances—between all the various parts of a mingled world of nature and of man. Ernesto, perturbed, reckless, approaching vacantly the arena of political strife, reflected upon the scene without him, the aimlessness and confusion of his own spirit. He was not unwilling, moreover, to discover in the perpetuated tumult of the world he lived in, a palliation for those dangerous passions of his own, which were still moving about, he knew, amidst the ruins of his mind.

CHAPTER III.

CYNTHIO IS AGAIN THE POET.

Cornelius and Francesco had separated from the group, and the two remaining friends continued walking together on the quay in the same narrow space unembarrassed by the merchandize, and remote from the bustle of the port. Before them lay the sea, behind them stretched a noble amphitheatre of houses, at the base of which ran a street thronged with its busy and mercantile population. Ernesto was endeavouring, not for the first time, to dissuade his friend from his transatlantic expedition. He proposed to purchase his vessel with the merchandize it held, at any value he would affix to it, so as to realize the utmost profit that could be expected from the undertaking. Cynthio smiled, as he explained, that he had indeed put merchandize on board, lest the Genoese should

pronounce him absolutely mad, but the sole object of his enterprise was to behold this new world, and visit this other family of man.

"The poet, then, has at last triumphed," said Ernesto, "over the sailor and the merchant."

"Perhaps it has," replied Cynthio. "But if the feelings which bear me onward are such as men, not knowing whether to deride or to admire, designate as romantic or poetical, I have at least no wish to obtrude them on the world. I shall be content to navigate the broad ocean, to pierce the rivers of yonder continent, and break the silence of its primæval forests, without a wish to communicate to another mind the sentiments which these originate in my own."

"But how is it, may I ask," said Ernesto, "that no fair damsel of Genoa has been able to withhold you from this enterprise? How is it that you—a naval character, which is fascinating to woman,—high in favour with our great admiral,—and, as I well remember, a man of tender sentiment withal,—how is it that you are not detained amongst us by the gentle bonds of matrimony?"

A slight blush was visible on the sun-burnt cheek of the poet-sailor, as he proceeded to explain himself on this so delicate matter. "There was, indeed, a time," he said, "when love given and returned, appeared to my imagination so tran-

scendant a happiness, that all other gifts of life were deemed worthless in the comparison, or unenjoyable in the absence of it. But I was poor,—I crushed within me the feelings of my heart, till the torture was almost more than I could bear. On the topic of marriage we generally speak with levity, and I, also, could add my witticism to the current jest; but my heart was secretly consuming while I talked. I would have shared the rock and the vulture of Prometheus, if love, at length, might have released and rewarded me. My mind was robbed of her spirit of active thought, and all nature was divested of its tranquillizing power, by the torturing disquietude of an objectless passion. I was tempted to the wildest of schemes. I would plunge into a monastery,—I would bind myself by the vows of a loveless wedlock, that so I might cease to regret a happiness which would then be utterly impossible. Driven, at length, from my pensive and unprofitable calling, I followed a more gainful profession than the poet's. I, too, became a man of revenue, and entitled to have affections. But now, when I looked around me for that fond and graceful being to whom I was to devote myself, the vision of my fancy had disappeared. The beauty of woman was resplendent as heretofore, but the spirit with which I had animated it was

departed. I am no satirist of the daughters of Eve. Were Cornelius here, he would tell us that in the present state of society it is not possible that the most dependent of the two portions of mankind should excel in the nobler virtues of sincerity and a generous affection. I say not this—I will not pretend to assert which of the two sexes mingles least of vanity and selfishness in its regard for the other. I know this only, that I could not kneel before the shrine. It had been my folly or misfortune to attribute to woman a certain beauty of the mind that had no warrant from the homely teaching of experience. The lover will easily exalt the object of his tender admiration to an ideal excellence; but he who first creates his image of perfection, will hardly persuade himself that he sees it reflected to him in life. Passion will make the dullest brain imaginative; but the imaginative man must descend from his station, before he can be imbued with a fixed and constant passion. Every lover is a poet; but the poet, I suspect, is rarely converted into the genuine lover. Perhaps, also, there is a mental freedom, a liberty of thought as well as of purpose, which he who has long enjoyed knows not how to resign; and I may have become less apt and less fitted for the bonds of a perpetual and inseparable companionship. However this may be, I feel like one who has suffered the disap-

pointments of love, though my sighs have been breathed only to the winds."

Ernesto was almost induced to embosom his own more tender sorrows, but he kept silence. He felt an invincible repugnance to mention the name of Maddalena, even to his most intimate friend. Every other feeling he could control by the power of an all-desolating scorn; but the sentiments connected with the loss and death of that noble-hearted girl, bore with them a keen anguish that utterly subjected his proud spirit. He could have expressed his feelings only in tears.

After a short pause, Cynthio continued :—" But whatever have been my disappointments in love, or from the Muse, I murmur not at destiny. I, too, have lived. My spirit has not slumbered in its earthly shell, neither has my soul been limited to petty and sordid cares. I have been no stranger to such happiness, at least, as the intellectual and imaginative faculties can bestow. I have dwelt in the palaces of human thought, if not in those of marble and of gold; I have surveyed the varied field of man's existence, from an eminence more covetable than that of power. The world, with all its complication of feeling and belief, has laid lightly on my spirit. Mine has been no angry or disquieting philosophy, eager to destroy whatever it would not have created, or fearful for the

destruction of all that it felt itself unqualified to defend. I have wandered musingly and irresponsible amongst the columns of the people's church, satisfied that my whispered meditations could not harm a structure, which Time itself may be said rather to alter than to overthrow. Even the groves of a darker superstition, overhung with cloud, where the timid thought flits silently from bough to bough,—even there have I looked in, and with no uncharitable feeling. I, too, have lived. And while I continue to exist, I would continue to think, to feel, to inquire, to imagine."

"Oh, well can I understand," exclaimed Ernesto, "the impulse which carries you into this project; but much I grieve that we should be compelled to separate, when every day adds a fresh value to your friendship. My spirit will be lonely, indeed, and my thoughts will grow perilous to myself, when you have departed. I am unhappy, Cynthio, and you abandon me. There is a fatality in this place. A second time do I suffer under the curse of an unoccupied heart, and aggravated to tenfold malignity; for I have now tried all, and have lost all. Virtue, love, religion,—these are the very ashes of that blackened path on which I still am treading. My day passes like a sleepless night. I am without hope, or pleasure, or desire; yet have I no respite from vague and turbulent

emotions. The natural winds of heaven play not on the surface of the waters; yet it seems as if a hidden fire from beneath were uplifting the sullen and heavy surges of the mind.—But to lament our evils is only to exasperate them. The time is past when to be miserable was not altogether misery."

"Only assure me," replied Cynthio, "that I can befriend you by my stay, and yonder vessel, which is even now preparing to receive me, may sink beneath the waves. A few weeks past, Ernesto, I found a little child sitting, and sobbing to itself, on the sea-shore. It had neither home nor parents. I rejoiced,—for I could make the child my own. I would give my life for that boy's. Shall I then abandon my friend in his distresses?"

"Misery is selfish—I know not what I said. Go," continued Ernesto; "go, my friend: we cannot help each other. You also have your own peace to secure; happy in this, that you can still find life in *thought*, while I must seek for it in *passion*. Fear not for me," he added, with a derisive smile; "I shall, doubtless, be as happy as I have been."

A boat approached them, manned by some of the crew of Cynthio's vessel. The wind having shifted to a favourable quarter, this had been sent to bring their captain on board. As the boat touched the shore, there leapt from it a little urchin, who took his stand by the side of Cynthio, and looked up to

him in silence, with fixed and beaming eyes. It was the orphan he had so lately adopted. Ernesto pressed the hand of his friend, and, leading him towards the sea, was the first to say farewell. The departing poet, with few words, took his seat at the stern of the boat, the little orphan nestling down at his feet.

With tearless, but undiverted eye, Ernesto followed the departure of his friend; saw him enter his ship; saw the ship put forth her sails, one by one; and strained his vision till the speck, which it presented on the waters, vanished completely from his sight. As he turned from that ocean, which now separated him from his friend, and looked towards the town, the pompous train of Giannetino Doria, headed by that haughty nobleman himself, was seen passing in the distance. "At least, then, I have an enemy to hate!" said Ernesto, bitterly, to himself; "and this also is a passion. A few years ago," he continued, "this man would have quailed like a bondsman before the representative of the house of the Adorni; and now he would lord it over the whole nobility of Genoa. And the fool can be sarcastic! He taunts me with my *hermit-like* sagacity. He may chance to find that the hermit, as he calls me, can do as bold a deed as any that so miserable a worldling could devise."

At this moment, he became aware that he had been watched intently by a female, attired in the garb of a sister of charity, a class of nuns who devote themselves, as is well known, to visiting the sick. In addition to the hood, usually worn by these sisters, there fell a veil, which completely concealed her features; but it was evident, from her fixed attitude, and sudden retreat when noticed, that it formed no obstacle to her own observation of others. Knowing the kind of foe with whom he had to cope, Ernesto suspected this to be an emissary of Giannetino, employed in some scheme to poison or assassinate him. This suspicion, whether justified or not in the present instance, was sufficiently authorised by the known character of his opponent, and it had no tendency to enfeeble that passion of hatred which was now taking possession of his bosom. Life is never loved so much as when an enemy threatens to deprive us of it. Ernesto had, at no time, felt so much reluctance to contemplate the abridgment of his existence, as now that this was to be effected by the machinations of a wily adversary. He was resolved to try whose arm was the longer of the two.

CHAPTER IV.

VIOLA.

We must now turn to another personage of our history, whom the reader will probably suspect that we had altogether deserted. When Viola fell, as we have related, with shrieks, into the arms of her living and astonished husband, it will not be supposed that the quick invention, for which the one sex is so celebrated, and the willing faith by which that invention is so well assisted in the other, had failed to extricate her from the sudden dilemma into which she was thrown. She had just been visited, it seemed, by a horrid dream, in which she had beheld her husband lying dead before her; and, on entering his apartment, the attitude of sleep had been mistaken, by her fearful apprehension, for the prostration of death. Hence her shrieks, as she fell on what she supposed to be his

lifeless body. Her lord was delighted with this proof of a conjugal affection, so very dormant on all ordinary occasions. He remembered, indeed, that her cries had been redoubled at the very moment when, by his fond embrace, he had fully testified his vitality; but this last exclamation could, of course, be no other than one of mingled joy and surprise.

Viola controlled her emotions whilst in the presence of her husband; but, once more alone, her rage against Ernesto knew no bounds. The collected manner in which he had entered on the fulfilment of so bold and desperate an errand, was now clear evidence to her mind that he had, from the first, designed to trick, deceive, and expose her. She, who had boasted of superior penetration, had been, she thought, foiled and vanquished at her own weapons. His flight, which withdrew him from her revenge, confirmed all these suspicions.

But the offender had again returned. Viola had resumed the customary routine of a life of pleasure; and, notwithstanding a lively remembrance of past events, these two met under the restraints of a public assembly, with the accustomed congratulations of a renewed acquaintanceship. In the bosom of Viola, together with the passion of revenge, was revived a love for the person of Ernesto. She

thirsted to plant a dagger in his side, but was not unwilling, as a previous and necessary artifice, to lure him to her arms. It would be a double triumph to conquer his affections, and to wreak her vengeance for that cruel deceit which she attributed to him. On the part of Ernesto, a calm and even conciliatory deportment cost no effort whatever. He was not revolted, as he should have been, at the recollection of her atrocious design. He saw in Viola only the beautiful woman, and found in the past a matter only of curious reflection.

Music is universally applauded in terms of grateful commendation for its happy influence in allaying the perturbations of the mind. And this genial power we are not disposed to question; but there are times when the effect of music appears to be entirely reversed, and let it be gentle and melodious, as it is possible to conceive, it will still only agitate, and disturb, calling from their slumber the wild, unsettled, tumultuous passions of the heart. Such, at least, was the experience of Ernesto, as he stood amongst a circle of his guests, and listened to a kind of symphony which was being performed by his own musicians. There was nothing in his fixed aspect and stationary attitude to mark him out from others of that circle, who were following attentively a beautiful and complicate piece of

music. But how different were his feelings from those of one enraptured only with the melody! It was not the music but his own passions that he listened to. Strains such as those which calmed the fury of Saul, were calling up the vague emotions, the blind rage, and desperation of his soul. Imagination ever and anon placed the dagger or the conspirator in his hand, and then again would turn the point of the same dagger towards himself. The tyrant wish to overbear and predominate over his fellow-men, would enter into his ungoverned bosom. The few steps which lead up to a throne, promised an insurmountable barrier between himself and the rest of mankind; and from that little elevation it seemed to him that he was capable of enacting the despot, utterly irresponsible both to God or man. Then suddenly, he knew not why, his heart was melting with tenderness; and he could have poured his life-blood on the floor to have stilled the brief sorrows of a child. His spirit was put to the torture by sweet sounds, and strange and contradictory were the confessions that it made.

Escaping from this state of excitement which had become intolerable, he took refuge in a distant balcony which over-looked a garden belonging to the mansion. Here he met Viola. He accosted her in that tone of levity with which it was his

habit to converse. Some words of compliment led to more animated discourse.

"I have heard of you," she said, "I have traced your intellectual wanderings, I have seen you in imagination, standing in the porch of the Stoic, I have watched you kneeling in the cell of the eremite—"

"And now," interrupted Ernesto in mocking vein, "my wanderings have brought me back to the feet of Viola! Could they have a wiser termination?"

"There is certainly a predestined sympathy between us," said Viola, "that must be fated to endure for ever."

"Aye," said Ernesto, "let you and I occupy this actual moment as it passes with talk of everlasting love and sympathies eternal. It is thus that we expand and amplify existence. As for me, I linger not amongst the fading shadows of memory,—I listen not to the hopeful sound of coming events,—I stand on the revolving wheel of the ever present time; and standing thereupon, I swear to thee, Viola, that thou art—exquisitely beautiful! —and let thy designs be what they may, *seem* but again to love, and I will vow to thee eternal homage!"

There had existed between these parties that kind of intimacy which, how utterly soever it may

appear to be broken off, is yet so easily resumed. He gazed steadfastly on the lovely features and graceful form that stood before him. "The feelings of real life," he said, half musing to himself, "are even as unsubstantial,—as vague and transitory—as the emotions which rise and fall with the sounds of an orchestra. Our love and our hatred—each takes its turn. This, after all, is man's truest heaven!"—And as he spoke, he took the hand of Viola, and passed her arm round his own neck.

The entrance of several guests who had sought the balcony to enjoy the cool air of midnight, broke off this amorous conference, and finally separated the parties. Ernesto, as he retreated from the spot, observed in the garden below him, the same veiled figure of the sister of charity, who had excited his suspicions on the previous day. She appeared to have been watching himself and Viola.

When the visitors had departed, Stesso, who, owing to a whimsical partiality, had become a sort of privileged servant, approached his master, and delivered to him a written missive from Viola. In this it was hinted that a person in a mask and domino might find admittance that night by a private entrance, not altogether unknown to him to whom the intimation was sent. The shrewd

domestic, who had seen Viola, and guessed the nature of the message he had delivered, could not conceal the joy of his thoughts, but stood grinning with sympathetic delight. Ernesto was on the point of obeying the flattering summons, when on turning round, he caught sight of the expressive countenance of Stesso. The fastidious and unstable man immediately repudiated his own passion with disgust. "Thou shalt go thyself," he said; and investing the squat figure and ugly visage of Stesso in the appointed disguise, he despatched him, nothing loath, as his substitute.

Viola sat expecting the arrival of Ernesto, when the ungainly form of Stesso entered her apartment. This bitter and contemptuous reply to her invitation so wounded the feelings of the woman in her, that, losing all fortitude and self-command, she burst into tears. Stesso approached with caressing manner, and every act of his loathsome courtship was felt as the meditated insult of his master. It was some time before she could resume her accustomed spirit to repulse the intruder. At length, throwing down a purse of gold at his feet, she commanded him to depart with that bribe for his silence:—if he waited another second, he should be bound hand and foot by her own slaves, and deposited at the bottom of the sea—where also his silence would be effectually secured. Stesso adopted the more

pleasant alternative; he picked up the gold, and departed, jingling it in his hand:—this also was a good thing;—the bright gold was to him a recompense for every kind of loss or disaster.

Viola entertained no sentiment now towards Ernesto but unmingled and deadly animosity. She drew forth a poignard which had been concealed beneath her girdle, and by grasping its friendly hilt, obtained, as it were, some equipoise for her mind. The object of all this hatred had, in the mean time, dismissed her entirely from his thoughts; and if the anger of "the charming Persian" had been reported to him, he would have treated it with the same levity in which the proffer of her love had been entertained. No passion rested on his mind. The disappointment to which his sincere affections had been submitted — the fruitless efforts he had made to support himself on some great and permanent truth,—the conviction he felt of the hollowness of all speculation, and the futile transiency of all life, had left him in a state of fearful apathy.

CHAPTER V.

ERNESTO JOINS THE CONSPIRACY.

On his return to Genoa, the new senator had taken up his abode in the mansion which had previously belonged to, and been occupied by his own ancestors, and in which the late Count, his father, had in his earlier years resided. In determining to inhabit this palace, he had entirely overlooked, or greatly underrated the impression which might be produced upon his mind by the association of his father's crime with those walls within which it had been committed. Here was the scene of that guilt which the residue of the perpetrator's life had been spent in expiating. Count Adorno had murdered his brother in the mansion in which he was then living, perhaps in the very chamber in which he sat, or in which he was accustomed to sleep. The subject was perpetually recurring to his mind.

If he woke at midnight, his imagination would be employed in arranging the horrid circumstances of the crime, and grouping in a thousand different ways the figures of the assassin and his victim.

Ernesto made various inquiries of the old servants and friends of the family. He appeared to be asking questions of the most trivial matters of domestic economy,—he was gathering the horrid details of a murder. How different a story did the speaker *tell*, and the hearer *listen to!* How different an image was brought before the eye of him who had inquired from that which was occupying the mind of the respondent! Ernesto was told how the elder of two brothers had died in a fit of paralysis on the eve of his marriage;—he saw his father strike into the bosom of his happier relative. He was told that the survivor was so keenly afflicted by his loss, that he sat day and night beside the body of his deceased brother, nor left it a moment till it was interred;—he saw the assassin, fearful lest the falsehood of that report he had spread might be detected, keeping perpetual watch over the wounded corpse, and thus fixing on his burdened conscience the form and aspect of the murdered man. By a series of minute questions which appeared to have a very trifling purport, he finally assured himself in what chamber of the palace the murder had been committed. In one part of the

oak floor of this apartment he detected a slight unevenness of the surface, and on straining his sight, he could still discover traces of blood in the neighbourhood. Here then had the Count,—that cold and stately philosopher,—the door fast locked,—the murdered corpse beside him,—here had he, trembling lest each sound should be heard, and stooping on his hands and knees, scraped at the blood-stained floor! Ernesto followed him in imagination through many a sordid and degrading task, which guilt must have imposed upon the proud Adorno, ere he could have disguised his deed of violence under the appearances of a natural death.

The contemplation of this crime exercised a horrible fascination over the vacant heart and unoccupied spirit of Ernesto. He would enter into this apartment which to him, and to him only, was one of terrible association,—for *it* formed the conclusion of a suite of rooms splendidly decorated,—he would steal into it, and bolt the door behind him, as if he shared in that guilt which he came only to meditate. Walking softly, and with restrained breath across the room, he would kneel down upon the floor, and again and again examine and ponder those dim and sanguinary spots. Then rising, he would stand and recombine before his sight the whole history of the fratricide. Though he stood

fixed, and utterly motionless in these horrid meditations, it seemed that *his* foot was advancing, and *his* arm was rising to a deed of equal criminality. Even the remembrance of his father's dying countenance, which at one time had driven him into a pious hermitage, now tempted him to a defiance of Heaven. He felt impelled to brave the same direful remorse: he too would fill the vacant skies with the image of an avenging God.

While thus occupied in an apartment, which might excusably be said to be haunted by an evil spirit, a knock was heard upon the door, and there entered Fiesco, the conspirator! An hour and a scene more fitted for his purpose, he could not have selected. The old topic of their mutual hatred to Giannetino was renewed between them. Fiesco, whether with truth or falshood we cannot tell, assured him that this nobleman had already made attempts to destroy both of them by poison, and that the only means of preventing their own, was to secure the death of their implacable and insidious foe.—Before Fiesco left the apartment, Ernesto had given his hand to the conspirator, and pledged himself to the destruction of their enemy.

But it was not the death of Giannetino alone that was necessary for the purposes of the conspiracy. Both the Dorias must die; several of their chief supporters amongst the nobility must be

slain; and a general assault and insurrection in the city must be planned and executed. Having reconciled his mind, however, to one deed of blood, it was astonishing with what rapidity he now resolved upon all the rest.—It was but the old game of ambition, in which he, too, would take his part;—he had dipped his foot in the sanguine stream, and would wade it without further scruple. "Well, then, we are conspirators!" he said, as he again grasped the hand of Fiesco. "I see that life, when worth nothing else, is still a good stake to be played for. Verily, Giannetino, I do *love* thee in my *hatred!*"

But that alternation of passion and reflection which had hitherto distinguished the character, and diversified the life of Ernesto, did not fail to display itself on the present occasion. The enterprise to which he had pledged himself, soon ceased to animate and direct his energies; it lay an oppressive burden only on his spirit. What was Giannetino to him? What cared he who ruled in Genoa? Why should he mingle himself with conspirators?—But he had now pledged his honour—the resolution he had formed should stand,—it should, as it were, execute itself. It was now irrevocable,—a reflection which always affords a pleasant refuge to an inconstant and agitated mind.

To avoid suspicion, it was deemed advisable that all usual appearances of festivity should be exhibited; and the next day his saloons were illuminated and thronged with guests. But in his present mood, the puny excitements and irritating restraints of a pleasure-seeking multitude were intolerable. Quitting his palace, he walked forth alone into the midnight air. His slow, irregular, uncertain footsteps led him by the water-side, and the light of the moon was now guiding his intricate path amidst coils of rope, and chains stretched out from the ships and fastened to the quay. A little skiff was moored close to a flight of stone steps that descended into the water. Two seamen lay slumbering at the bottom of it. The restless conspirator awoke them, and proposing a reward, bade them carry him to sea, and there beat about till he should give them a signal to return.

The air freshened; and the boat flew swiftly through the waves. Clouds gathered over the face of the moon; but the shadow was not felt on the meditations of Ernesto. The breeze began to swell into a storm; but still the conspirator sate confined within the tumult only of his own thoughts. The mariners looked to him for the signal to return. "On! on!" was all he muttered in reply. The navigation became perilous. A certain tremulous hope occurred to Ernesto that the storm would

overwhelm him in its fury;—that the engulfing waves of the sea would liberate him from that dreadful engagement, from which, at the same time, he would not extricate himself;—that he might be swept from the world, before he had rendered his soul yet more guilty than it was. He quelled the rising suggestion, which will revive at such moments, that life *might* be immortal. It was not for him, he thought, who had laboured to entertain this belief as a hope, to be haunted by it as a fear. It was not for him, who had been impeded in his faith by none of the joys of existence, who had desired only to sacrifice for it every earthly happiness, who had striven earnestly, passionately, but in vain! to support his spirit on the hope of immortality—it was not for him to suffer the alarms of a panic-struck imagination. "The boat cannot *live* in such a sea!" exclaimed one of the mariners. The expression fell upon his ear, but only to be played with in the eddies of a reckless and irreligious imagination. "Aye, the little boat," thought he, "with its fluttering sail, its apt cordage, and its bird-like flight along the waters, may well be said to have a *life!* And what have its human tenants, but even such a life? —a constructed and unessential being?—And the boat has its death, also, to undergo,—its separation into many elements on which a brief and specious

unity has been imposed. We are launched, like the vessel, by a hand we cannot know, and on a voyage that is not ours. We will die with the little boat."

The danger continued to increase. The frail bark was at length completely overmatched. It filled—it reeled—Ernesto sunk. The form of Maddalena seemed at that moment to hover above his head. He grasped at the floating fragments of the wreck. As he sunk and rose amidst the waves, he called, vehemently for help!—if life should be preserved, he might yet win that heaven which the vision of the lost Maddalena had suddenly made palpable to his imagination.

Exhausted, and clinging in a state of unconsciousness to the floating timber, Ernesto was washed on shore. His companions in danger were also saved. On recovering his senses, he found himself in his own palace.—But the vision of Maddalena had departed. He was the same hopeless Ernesto!—the same unwilling conspirator!

CHAPTER VI.

PROGRESS OF THE CONSPIRACY — CORNELIUS HARANGUES THE POPULACE.

THERE were not wanting, in the government of Genoa, the usual elements of discord; and no man could have been found more capable of applying them to his own ambitious purposes than Fiesco. The family of the Fregosi, who had been last expelled from power, still rankled with revenge against Andrea Doria, and were capable of seeing, in the "Restorer of his country's liberties," the traitor only to their mischievous faction. A still greater number of the nobility were offended at the rising domination of the nephew, Giannetino. All these, Fiesco enlisted in his cause. He counted also upon cajoling the multitude, amidst shouts of liberty, to elevate him to a throne. His own vassals formed a considerable body; and he contrived, under various pretences, to introduce into the town

a much greater number of these retainers than the laws of the republic permitted. By keeping separate the discordant parts of the conspiracy, he prevented any explanation from passing between them, which might prove hostile to his interests; and also centered in himself the whole power of the extensive combination. The chief of the Adorni and the Fregosi were found ranged under his banner; and, on the night of the insurrection, the philosophical opponents, Ernesto and Cornelius, met, to their mutual surprise, engaged in the same political adventure, overruled by one who cared nothing for the philosophy of either.

The eventful period, at length, arrived, when, all preparations having been matured, the insurrection was to take place. Fiesco had spent the day in the midst of pleasures; and his intercourse with the Dorias had been marked, on both sides, with more than usual urbanity. Messages had been sent to all engaged in the enterprise, and to many to whom the secret had not been hitherto disclosed, instructing them to assemble that evening in the palace of Fiesco. The gates were thrown open to all who chose to enter, but shut to any who attempted to return.

Cornelius, as the reader has already gathered, had been inveigled into a plot, whose object was as remote as possible from any which the philan-

thropist had at heart. Prior to joining the assembly at the palace, he had his own especial task to perform. In an open space of the town, a number of hewn stones, collected for the purpose of building, were hastily piled into a heap, presenting a small platform, with a rude flight of steps upon either side. The temporary structure was soon surrounded by a dense crowd, chiefly composed of artisans. Through this congregation, the pale student made his way, and, ascending his little rostrum, the man of abstractions proceeded to harangue the living populace of Genoa.

His oration was delivered with flushed cheek and kindled eye, and feeble voice strained to its utmost. He showed how the anticipations and the regrets of the world—the visions of an Elysium, or the fables of a golden age—had both pointed to a state of felicity far greater than that which was seen realised on earth;—that this state of felicity required only a right development of our human nature;—that this development would take place by means of extended instruction and equitable institutions;—and that the history of past centuries would soon exist as a strange, yet cautionary, record of the by-gone and disastrous follies of the race. "Mine," he exclaimed, "is not that indolent and aimless philosophy, which luxuriates apart in its own proud and undisturbed enjoyments,—which is con-

tent to observe all things, and leave all things as it found them,—which, though great principles are in conflict, stands aloof; and only, when the contest is over, advances on the field to sum up what is lost or won to humanity;—a philosophy which, be the achievement what it will, mounts never into the car of triumph, but walks in the procession of life, the only silent and unmoved spectator. As for me, I cannot deem myself in possession of a truth, but I must desire, and believe, that all others will eventually partake it with me. I hate the harsh discord of an outer and an inner doctrine; of a creed for the scholar, and another for the multitude. There is for man one truth, as there is one God: nor could I believe in the unity of the presiding mind, without a corresponding faith in the universality of the reason of man. Never will I consent to call that truth, which is demanded only by the wants, or produced by the tendencies of society. No: let us model society to forms that are congruous with the pure dictates of reason. Let us act—all of us—in a manner worthy of that intellect which God has bestowed."

As he was proceeding in his address, he was interrupted by the passing of a funeral procession along the outskirts of his auditory. This spectacle of gaudy sorrow was composed of an open car, profusely decked with plumes, and other lugubrious

ornaments, accompanied on each side, and followed in the rear by a number of monks, bearing long tapers in their hands. These they carried (as was then customary in Genoa,) in a slanting position, in order that a multitude of ragged children, who mingled with the procession, might collect the droppings of the wax upon small pieces of paper, which, for this purpose, were held up in the hands of these tattered Mænads. Cornelius, observing that this spectacle had diverted the attention of his audience, took an oratorical advantage of the interruption. Pointing towards the car, with its miserable followers, " Behold," he cried, " an apt emblem presented to your eyes! Behold the pomp of wealth!—useless, unenjoyed. Behold the attendant anxieties of life! and see subsistence caught at from ungraceful prodigality! But this perverse condition of the world shall have an end. Not long shall the pallid artisan toil all the day, and find hunger has gained upon him by the night; while the man, for whom he is worn with labour, becomes corrupted and enfeebled by unprofitable sloth. The arts of life shall be practised for the good of all, and to the distress of none. But ye must first, O men of Genoa! obtain your rightful share of *power* in the state. The whole community must govern itself; and then a true and universal equality will soon prevail amongst the children of men. Ye know Fiesco,—

the bountiful Fiesco! he and others, even now, are plotting to extend to you this power. When a tumult is heard, at night, in the streets, shout 'Fiesco and Liberty!' It is your cause, it is the cause of justice, of truth, of humanity! Shout 'Fiesco and Liberty!'"

The harangue had been listened to throughout in dead silence, but the concluding shout was nevertheless responded to by the populace. It was plain, at least, that there was to be a riot. The exhilirating news ran through the town, and the mob hastened to provide itself with clubs and pikes, and other weapons fit to support the cause of truth, justice, and humanity! Before the crowd separated, a rival orator, with a few words, greatly increased the impression which Cornelius had left. This was no other than Stesso, who had mounted himself on the shoulders of a brawny labourer. "D'ye understand?", he cried to those about him, who appeared inert. "We are to govern ourselves. Break down the prisons! We are all to be rich.—Huzza!—Let us sack the churches! Shout 'Fiesco and Liberty!'"

Meanwhile, Cornelius passed through the tumult with the serene air of conscious virtue, and entered the precincts of the palace of Fiesco. Here a mixed, wondering, and agitated congregation met his gaze. Those who were most deeply pledged to

the conspiracy, were at this moment the least clamorous of the assembly. Ernesto had arrived with his body of retainers, and preserved the port and aspect of the mere observer. In the centre of the excited and questioning multitude stood the chief of the Fregosi, an old man, erect, silent, motionless, waiting for the onslaught. To him the surrounding assemblage, with all the plots and machinations by which it had been collected, was but his instrument of revenge on the person of Andrea Doria. His lips were seen to move—it was with devout and inward prayer to Heaven that his enemy might be delivered into his hands! Then there entered the magnificent figure and glowing, but somewhat disturbed countenance of Fiesco. He came fresh from that parting interview with his young and noble bride, wherein he had declared that "she should either see him no more, or behold all Genoa at her feet." His entrance immediately marshalled the assembly around him into a listening and breathless audience. He briefly harangued them, kindling their wrath against the Dorias, and exciting their sympathy with himself by such topics as their passions immediately responded to. He declared that three several times had the insidious Giannetino attempted his destruction by poison,—that the life of every nobleman not prepared to succumb to this insolent usurper was in the same

peril as his own,—that the tyranny of the Dorias, if not immediately checked, would shortly pass beyond all control,—that already they were fighting to preserve life itself from their lawless power. He then proceeded to portion out to the several sections of the conspirators their respective parts in the terrible drama that was to ensue. Ernesto was associated with Jerome, the brother of Fiesco, and the aged Fregosi, in command of a body destined to seize the ducal palace, and put the Dorias to death. Other divisions were ordered to secure the several gates of the city. Fiesco, himself, undertook the attack upon the arsenal, and the capture of the gallies lying in the harbour.

Many of those who listened to this harangue were now, for the first time, informed of the real design of the conspiracy, but none ventured to expostulate, for each was fearful that he might prove to be the only person left in ignorance. Cornelius had watched in vain for some mention of the liberties of the people. He had heard nothing but denunciations against the Dorias, and seen nothing on every side but indications of a furious partizanship. Beginning to suspect the true nature of the enterprise in which he had engaged, he alone approached Fiesco, and openly declared that he would not draw his sword in such a cause. "I desire it not," was the reply. "You have sufficiently ful-

filled your part, by preparing the multitude without to assist us."

"I will go forth and undeceive them."

Fiesco answered not, but immediately ordered the philanthropist into the custody of some of his vassals. "Do not hurt him," he said, with contemptuous kindness. "Let the philosopher be confined in some apartment of the palace from which he may watch, if he pleases, the transactions of this night. It will be well if this convert him from his wild speculations; for we shall not need the philanthropist to teach them a second time in Genoa."

CHAPTER VII.

THE NIGHT OF THE INSURRECTION.

We must now limit ourselves to follow the conduct and feelings of Ernesto through the terrific novelty of circumstance into which he had precipitated himself. Our hero could rush into the most desperate purposes, but he could not *act* all that he could so readily imagine. Even if incited by a more decided ambition, we doubt if his speculative mind, filled with various sentiments, and tutored to many modes of thinking, could ever have entered with success into the sharp, unflinching contest for power—a contest which, in that day, was systematically carried on by means as unscrupulous as in any period of history. Sallying forth from the palace of Fiesco, and traversing the yet quiet streets of Genoa—at a time when in consistency with his enterprise, his thoughts should have been

concentrated on the sword he wielded—he was revolving, as if for a last certainty, arguments such as those he might have discussed with Cornelius. He was convincing himself that the world must in every age exhibit the same conflict of the same passions;—he was determining that one form of government was as beneficial to the people as another;—he was diminishing the heinousness of all crime by depreciating that human happiness which it is the very essence of crime that it destroys.

Whilst revolving such ideas, his step slackened, and he found himself in the rear of his party. Through the town of Genoa there runs a deep ravine, over which a bridge has been thrown with singular boldness. Houses built on the declivity beneath, though of extraordinary height, are spanned with ease by its towering arches. His road brought him upon this bridge, and drawing towards its ramparts, he paused, perplexed and bewildered by the multiplicity of reflections which were coursing through his mind. Nothing was yet heard in the deep midnight except the forward tread of his own party of soldiers, but these were hastening, as he well knew, to deeds of bloodshed. They might go—but they must do their work alone. He had no care to withdraw himself from the danger of the enterprise—he had openly joined it—he

would partake the hazards of its failure—but why should he help them in the sanguinary task itself?

Alarm was spreading amongst the citizens; groups of anxious inquirers began to collect; and several parties passed in rapid flight across the bridge. Ernesto endeavoured to look on, as at some wild phantasm presented to his unconcerned and heedless speculation. He fortified his spirit, and protected himself from the inroads of compunction by a reasoned contempt of all things. This was his armour, this was his breast-plate of defence. All was transient—momentary—vain. As for him, "the grave was his house—he had made his bed in the darkness."

A little child, separated from its parents, ran to his knees for protection. He took it in his arms, and attempted to soothe its terrors. Its little hands were clasped round his neck. In musing vein he thought how true it is that a father can hardly be a conspirator—that there is strong power in an infant's embrace to hold men to the serener virtues of life! A woman returned upon the bridge with distracted air, searching and calling for her child. Ernesto restored it, and the delighted mother, folding her infant in her bosom, poured forth her exclamations of gratitude to its preserver. The conspirator felt reproved.

The panic had now become general, and the

whole town was in a state of indescribable uproar and confusion. The violent ringing of bells, and the discharge of musketry were mingled with shouts of combatants and the shrieking of women. People fled, they knew not why or whither. Lights were seen rapidly passing to and fro; and the torch which was one moment eagerly kindled for the sake of guidance, was the next extinguished lest it should betray to an enemy. Many a private and long smothered hatred was gratified in that hour of universal license. The impatient son ceased that night to be the nurse and protector of his slow-dying parent; friends who met daily at the same social board, met then in search of each others lives:—all the evil elements of society were let loose. Though the town, illuminated only by the flitting torches of its agitated inhabitants, was but dimly revealed to the sight, yet was it made terribly distinct to the imagination of Ernesto by the cries of terror and of grief which reached him from its innumerable streets. It was the peace of this noble city, the creation of many years of prosperous industry,—it was the established liberties of this civilised community, the wise and fortunate adjustment of many rival interests, passions and prejudices,—that he, in the insane levity of his heart, had exposed and trifled with. The conspirator was abashed.

As he leaned against the balustrade of the bridge, and looked into the darkness below, a faint similarity of position recalled to mind that period of his early history, when he approached the verge of the mountain precipice with desperate resolution to plunge headlong into the abyss. Would that the voice of the idiot never had been heard!—Would that his being had ended *then!* He felt that he was still and ever had been the same Ernesto! Scenes of his past life were now rising fast upon his memory. He saw himself transported to the hermitage upon the sea-shore, kneeling at its homely altar-piece, and before its simple crucifix. Why had he forsaken it? The art of living with his fellow-men, so easy to all others, was unattainable by him. He could not learn the common wisdom of the world. He would return to that solitude—he would pray if he could not believe—he would kneel if he could not pray!

Stung with shame and remorse, he ran through the city calling on the conspirators, but in vain, to desist from their guilty undertaking. They could not hear his voice; if they heard, they could not in their present state of passion even *understand* his so untimely expostulation. One criminal only was he able to arrest in his career. Amidst the tumult he caught sight of Stesso, who, with great joy, was carrying off a young damsel in spite of her most piteous cries. As we have seen

a fox represented with its white-feathered prey flung across its shoulder, — just so, in the same fashion, and the same spirit, was Stesso posting off through the dark with his stolen booty. The indignation of Ernesto was roused, and with one buffet he laid the rude spoiler on the earth. The terrified maiden effected her escape, and Stesso was left senseless on the ground.

In one of the more retired streets, elevated within a niche against the wall, stood a stone image of the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus in its arms. A glass lantern, enclosing a dim taper, hung suspended over the brow of the Virgin. Even in this season of anarchy, the spot marked out by its faint but hallowed light, had hitherto preserved its melancholy quiet. Into this peaceful and luminous circle had stolen the dark and shadowy figure of that sister of charity who has more than once crossed our path. She knelt beneath the Virgin, absorbed in earnest prayer, and as Ernesto hurried with increased rapidity of step across this tranquil and sacred spot, he fancied that he heard his own name murmured from her lips.—Hurrying on, he beheld a hoary senator flying from his assassins. In this man he recognized one of the proscribed, and saw that his own vassals were amongst his pursuers. With frantic gesture he rushed forward and called on them to stay their hands, but his

voice was unheard or disregarded. They overtook their trembling victim—they pierced him with a hundred wounds—they proceeded with shouts of triumph in their work of destruction. "I, too, am thy murderer!" cried Ernesto, and threw himself in anguish on the bleeding body.

"Victory! Victory! Fiesco and Liberty! A Fiesco! An Adorno!"—Such were the exclamations that roused the penitent conspirator from his attitude of contrition. Fiesco had seized upon the galleys, and made himself master of the arsenal and the port. His brother Jerome, with whom Ernesto had been associated in command, had not so completely succeeded in the execution of his allotted task. But though both of the Dorias had been allowed to escape from the ducal palace, the elder only had been able to effect his retreat from the city: Giannetino had been overtaken and slain before he could reach the gates. The enterprise was successful. Ernesto rose and moved away from the murdered senator.

A murmur now ran amongst the insurgents, and intelligence was at length brought to Ernesto of the sudden death of him who had been the head and sole contriver of the conspiracy. In the very moment of victory, as Fiesco was hastily passing from one vessel to another, the plank on which he stepped turned beneath his foot, and precipitated him into

the water. He sunk, encumbered by his weighty armour, and never again rose to the surface. In this intelligence, Ernesto saw a groundword for a more definite ambition than any he had yet entertained. He had been well aware that he must trust, not to the promises of the aspiring Count, but to his own promptitude or good fortune, for any share in the prize which might fall to him. Now, however, having for his rival the surviving brother Jerome, whose incapacity was well known, there appeared to be little obstacle to his sole possession of the supreme power. Plans of life the most discordant, which brought with them, or presumed, the most opposite habits and characters, were passing rapidly through his mind,—were discussed, adopted, and dismissed in the interval of a few hurried, checked, uncertain footsteps on the pavement of Genoa. It is probable that he would have yielded at that moment to the incitement of a bad ambition, and a tyrannical love of power, if he had not been abashed by the sudden consciousness of the weak and wretched versatility he was displaying. He fell back into his own bitter mood. He shrunk into himself. He left to other men the fruits of the enterprise. He retreated to his favourite position,—an utter indifference; to his *principle* of thought — the worthlessness of all things. He found peace only in this desolation,

and a firm resolve only in the equal contempt of all resolutions. "The grave was his house, he had made his bed in the darkness."

Then there fell upon his mind a kind of living death, so that the world before him, with all its active impulses and moral laws, was as a piece of mechanism whose movements reached him not. Had Stesso encountered his master *now*, he might have carried off his prize without a rebuke. In his chance-directed way, Ernesto again passed the image of the Virgin Mary. The sanctity of the spot had been violated, and where the sister had knelt, there lay the bleeding corpse of some unhappy wretch, who had probably fled thither with the vain hope of sanctuary. It lay in the light of that taper which was illuminating the placid brow of the sacred image. Ernesto paused,—he looked at the Virgin, and then at the bleeding corpse,—and pursued his heedless way.

He came to a large square, and observed in the centre a pile of loose stones, at the foot of which sat the figure of a youth, in attitude of deepest dejection. That pile of stones was the same from which Cornelius had harangued the populace;—that figure was Cornelius himself. The philanthropist had been made to witness from his confinement in the palace of Fiesco, the horrid spectacle of that night, and with what anguish of

mind we shall not attempt to describe. His guards becoming impatient of the sluggish office assigned them, had left their prisoner, who had thus been able to make his escape. He sat in silence, and took no notice of Ernesto, who also stood for some time in silence beside him. "I know thy thoughts, Cornelius," he said, at length; "I know thy sufferings. Thy faith in God and man is gone! The world is other than it seemed in your philosophy, Cornelius. The sand of the desert was to be blown away, and the garden of Paradise to appear. The blinding and destructive tempest passes over us—but the sand falls into its place again,—and the same desert is beheld. There are hours in which we learn more than years of study could have taught,—hours in which we pierce through the thin mystery of life, into the utter void that lies beyond. Such an hour I, too, have passed. I have stood—even I!—bound to the stake of martyrdom;—have seen the gaping multitude prepared to enjoy the spectacle of my sufferings—have felt that no eye in heaven was looking on! I have earned the diabolic privilege to know and taunt the misery of another. Curse God and die!"

As these words were uttered, the drooping head of Cornelius fell against that heap of stones which, a short time before, had borne him in the proud

attitude of the orator. The body lay upon the earth—the spirit of the philanthropist had departed. That disorder, of which he had been so evidently the destined pray, had advanced with accelerated speed to its fatal termination. Whether his dying thoughts were of that despairing nature which his gloomy companion depicted—whether he had utterly discarded his peculiar hopes, or, still confiding in the destinies of man, had only postponed their accomplishment to some more fitting and distant time, we cannot tell. "Generous spirit!" said Ernesto, looking down from his unaltered posture at the fallen body, "How good, if less good! How hadst thou been beloved of man, hadst thou not loved humanity!"

Continuing his way in the same cold and bitter mood, he stumbled over a mangled carcass, and stooped to see what enemy it was, who, as he said, had so nearly tripped him to the earth. The moon had now risen on the darkness of the night, and displayed the features of Giannetino, his prostrate foe. He put his foot carelessly on the body, and turned it a little, that he might behold the features more distinctly. "Thy head is trailing in the slime, thou delicate and haughty nobleman! Lo, how the moon smiles on thee, sweet Endymion!—Thou wert ever amorous, and the sex were kind,—will they kiss thee now, Giannetino? Even my

hate is cold,—I *cannot* triumph." As with such reflections he bent over the body of his fallen enemy, he was struck in the back with a stiletto. The weapon glanced aside from that armour which, in common with the other conspirators, he wore concealed beneath his usual dress; and, as he turned round upon his assailant, the spent and exhausted form of Viola fell into his arms. Attired in the habit of a page,—in that same habit under which she had made her first conquest over his passions, she had tracked his footsteps through the scene of midnight confusion. More than once had she approached the object of her dire resentment, and more than once had she been separated and driven back by the intervening multitude. At length she had again discovered Ernesto, and in such an attitude as presented the desired opportunity for dealing her long-meditated blow. Had not her weapon been intercepted by the steel corslet, it could not possibly have disappointed her revenge.

Ernesto snatched the mask from the face of the always beautiful Viola, and declared that he could repay the anger of so lovely an assassin—only with endearments. Viola repeatedly attempted to pierce his side with the dagger she still held in her hand, but was as frequently foiled by the concealed armour; whilst he, on the other hand, taunted her

unsuccessful endeavours, and answered her rage with the mockery of love. Her intense and bitter mortification was more than so proud a spirit could endure, and having exhausted all her efforts against this scornful and contemptuous opponent, she turned the steel against herself. Ernesto found a bleeding captive in his embrace, who, on opening his arms, fell insensible to the earth.

Meanwhile it had become evident to all Genoa, that with the death of Fiesco the conspiracy which he alone had organized and sustained was at an end. His brother, Jerome, was utterly unable to occupy his vacant place, or keep together a combination of men united by a common confidence in their chief, but by no common purpose of their own. The insurgents already thought only of self-preservation. The assembled senate had resumed its confidence, and troops from the provinces had arrived to support its authority. Ernesto now observed a company of these troops wheeling round to take possession of the only unoccupied gate of the city. His retreat would soon be entirely cut off;—a dungeon and a public execution were *now* the prospects of the conspirator. He had thrown away and relinquished to others the good fortune of success, but it was not in his power so easily to dismiss the penalty of failure. Here his proud spirit, which had been so long accustomed to shape

its own destinies, (unenviable lot !) was co pelled to succumb to a fate urged on it from without. And gloomy as that fate appeared, and melancholy as was the suffering task that it threatened to impose upon him, yet the mental resistance which it excited, served to arouse for a moment the natural energies of his character. He smiled as he reflected that — happen what would — it was the bitterness of life and not of death which *he* ought to shrink from.

But at this instant of imminent peril there appeared, as if she were his good angel, the sister of charity, leading forward a horse of singular power and magnitude. The small hand of the sister lay lightly on the bridle of the towering steed, who, with head erect, submitted to the slender guidance with a sort of wondering and astonished obedience. This time there floated from beneath her disordered hood a few locks of beautiful hair, giving pleasant note to the imagination of those features which, however, were still rigidly concealed. She led the horse to the side of Ernesto, and pointed to the vacant saddle. He first committed the wounded Viola to the care of the charitable sister. The sister answered only by pointing again with impatience to the vacant saddle, and then to the gate before them. Mounting the horse, he darted through the open gate, just as its lawful guardians

had arrived to take possession of it. Having gained the open country, the superior mettle of his steed enabled him with ease to make his escape towards Rome.

The sister of charity gazed earnestly after the flying Ernesto; but in strange contradiction to that profession which her garb betokened, she bestowed not a word nor a single glance of condolence on the wounded and dying Viola. She left the spot without manifesting by speech or look the least feeling of commiseration. Some time after, indeed, there came men with a litter, whom she had probably despatched. They carried that ill-fated woman to her own residence, where she soon expired.

Stesso, having recovered from his unlucky blow, and seeing how matters were likely to end, stowed upon his person whatever he was able of his master's property; and then he also made his escape,—but in an opposite direction.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONCLUSION.

The solitary domestic to whom the old and neglected palace at Rome had been left in charge, was surprised to see its owner return to take possession of it without preparatory notice, accompanied by no attendant, and clad in soiled and blood-stained garments. To that air of desertion which had before characterised the Adorni palace, were now added evident traces of the rude injuries it had sustained during the late siege and capture of the city. Its dim and massy hangings so long undisturbed, its numerous statues—that sculptured population which Ernesto had been reluctant to remove,—all had been torn, broken, destroyed. The appearance of gentle and fanciful decay which scarcely marred the beauty of its pleasure-grounds,

was now changed for an aspect of utter waste and heartless devastation. Beds trodden into hard earth,—trees fractured, uprooted, lying on the soil — everywhere violence, everywhere destruction. Yet this ruined mansion was the only refuge, and this spot of ground the only territory that now remained to one whom his country was branding with the name of traitor, and visiting, as far as its power extended, with the penalties of his crime.

More like a restless ghost condemned to walk the earth than one of its living inhabitants, Ernesto wandered through this abode which had witnessed the earlier and happier days of that solitary culture of the mind, to him so hapless in its results, and which now in its present state of total ruin, formed no inexpressive type of the worse desolation of his own heart. As he paced the garden, a spade standing upright in the soil drew his attention. He leaned upon the handle. The spot of earth which surrounded him must now be cultivated for his subsistence,—why not, he thought, by his own hand? "Yes," he continued, following out this train of reflection, "I will take refuge from the dangerous liberty of unsettled thought in the constant and fixed necessities of an animal nature. Thank Heaven that we hunger and thirst, and feel heat and cold! I will dig, — I will plant, — I will

gather the produce, and so be sustained with food, and clad with raiment. The morning shall take me to the field of labour, and the evening shall restore me weary and oblivious to the couch of sleep. Methinks there is soft nestling in the thorny hedge of adversity!"

Hereupon he began to dig into the soil. He entered on his task with sudden alacrity; but in a few minutes his ardour sunk. He threw away the spade:—it seemed to him the idlest of things to be labouring for existence. Returning into the palace, he roamed from one vacant apartment to another, till at length he found himself in the Gothic chapel, and standing beside the cenotaph of Maddalena. How often were his regrets doomed to be revived! The more intimate his acquaintance with human life and himself, the more certain became his melancholy conviction, that he had lost with Maddalena his only chance of happiness. His mind reverted to that period, when, standing where he then stood, he was accustomed in the excitement of his imagination actually to *see* the form of the departed—to behold it enter from a side door—to watch it kneeling before the crucifix—to wait till it rose and turned its pallid countenance towards him. In his present state of blank and unrelieved despair, it seemed to him that those were happy hours!

As he dwelt upon this recollection, the same excitement of fancy appeared to have revisited him. He thought that he beheld the door open, and the figure of Maddalena enter the chapel. It proceeded, as in former times, to the altar, and knelt down in the attitude of prayer. By a determined effort of his reason, Ernesto convinced himself that the appearance before him was but the phantom of a disordered imagination. He resolved to watch it patiently. Perhaps, at the moment of departure, it would, as of old, turn its countenance towards him. He was not disappointed. The figure rose, and, turning round, looked steadfastly upon Ernesto. It approached,—the hue of death was *not* upon its features. It held forth its hand,—it spoke—he clasped the living Maddalena to his arms! "Oh God, thou *art* in Heaven!" burst from his enraptured lips, as he threw himself upon his knee to receive this incarnation of his happiness. The light of gladness spread that instant through the whole extent of the gloomy, disgraced, and desolated building.

It has already been intimated that when Maddalena was conveyed from the prison, where she had acted so heroically, life was suspended, but not extinct; we need hardly say, that means had been found to restore animation. Buondelmonte, still persisting in his cruel scheme of devoting his

daughter to a nunnery, saw that his design admitted of no further delay. Sylvester was not alive to interfere with his projects; and Maddalena was recovered from the tomb only to be immured in a convent. A heart warmed with the purest and noblest of human feelings, was thrust into the mortal chill of a cloister. High and impenetrable walls barred her from all communication with the living world. A step that was wont to be elastic with joy, was doomed to tread the unyielding stone,—an eye that looked out with so much ardour, was condemned to meet for ever the obscure day—of her monastic prison-house. Buondelmonte, that he might not be interrupted in this design of paternal love, had given out to all Rome, and especially to Ernesto, that his daughter had sunk irrecoverably under the influence of the poison; and we are happy that we can give even this mitigating explanation of that smile of triumph which had been observable on the old man's features, when he assured Ernesto of the death of his child.

At the siege of Rome, Buondelmonte was, as we have seen, taken prisoner. His well-known avarice had exaggerated the general estimation of his wealth, and he was not released but on the payment of such a ransom, as left him little superfluous treasure on which to exercise his unhappy propen-

sities. His motive for retaining his daughter in a convent had now ceased,—if, indeed, a blind passion, which so signally over-reached itself, may be dignified with the name of motive,—and a more excusable parsimony had induced him to recall her home.

Maddalena, on her return, found that Ernesto had taken up his abode at Genoa. The greatest delight that her liberation procured was to visit that deserted palace, so rife to her with affecting associations. There, in the chapel, she beheld her own cenotaph, and read its tender inscription,—an avowal of love that made her heart glow with happiness, while it seemed to consign that happiness to the oblivion of the tomb. She might have been seen leaning with her elbow on that marble cenotaph, a more beautiful image of regret than the sculpture above her, which was eternally weeping her own imagined and anticipated loss. Three years had elapsed since the erection of that monument;—did the same passion still exist which had designed that figure of regret, and dictated the inscription on its pedestal? Maddalena resolved, if possible, to discover. With this intention she set out for Genoa. Some jewels, belonging to her late mother, which had accompanied her to and from her imprisonment, supplied the requisite means for her enterprise. It is unneces-

sary to add that Maddalena and the "sister of charity" were one. Neither shall we dwell upon the fears, the desponding hours, the jealousy, the alarms which she was fated to endure under that character. *She* did not dwell upon them. Though a long and suffering interval had passed since her separation from Ernesto, the same joyous, fond, and trustful spirit had been retained; and, at the happy change of fortune which their meeting prognosticated, her natural cheer of mind instantly revived. Clouds had interposed, and blotted the running stream; but the same clear, unsullied waters had been flowing on beneath the shadow.

With full and unhesitating delight, Ernesto received a gift sent to him as if direct from Heaven. The beating heart of this pure and ardent girl, communicated new life to his own. Her gentle voice, heard amidst the tumult of his thoughts, was sufficient to harmonize their chaos; her light arm upon his neck, was shield enough against every feeling hostile to his peace. His own existence had been without pleasures, or wishes, or hopes;—he now took all *hers* for his portion. She brought happiness for both. Nor was the strange and painful experience through which he had passed, altogether without a beneficial influence on his present disposition. H[illegible] f against all the ordinary disaste[illegible] vexations

of life;—he was assured that none of these had power to afflict him;—while his heart was fresh as infancy to the lightest touches of an affectionate happiness. The crater of a spent volcano was suddenly blooming with its sheltered roses.

The marriage of these parties was not long delayed. And now all the interests of life—call them vulgar, if you will—came fast around. Hope and activity were no longer strangers to Ernesto. The simplest toils and most ordinary projects were stirring tasks, and full of pleasant anticipation, now that the welfare of one so much beloved was implicated in their success. His own existence was valued. Morality, as the science of happiness, met again with its due respect, and that sentiment of honourable obligation which animates its precepts was applauded in others, and cultivated in himself. With moral, were revived religious feeling. Even in the absence of all positive creed of theology, these are capable of existing. The feelings of self-esteem and self-reproach, connected with reflections upon even an *unknown* God and an *inscrutable* future, are sufficient to generate a sentiment of piety.

Time rolled on, and Ernesto became the father as well as the husband. The clinging dependence of his [illegible] parent feel doubly dependent on [illegible] men, and the regu-

lated progression of events. The multitude became society; nature became Providence. Thus the offspring repays its peculiar debt even at its birth; for it also welcomes the parent into a new world, — a world of complicate and prospective interests, which is felt to lie beneath the care and fatherly protection of a superintending power.

Withdrawn entirely from that inner seclusion of the mind in which he had hitherto lived, Ernesto now shared steadily in those social influences which his friend, Cynthio, had declared him to stand in need of. He was far, however, from adopting that mode of reflection peculiar to the poet. Cynthio inquired after truth for *the world*, rather than *himself;* he might be said to have studied *life*, rather than *doctrine*. His faith was *subjective*. But the natural temperament of Ernesto, whatever may have been his philosophical training, required a faith of a more decisive character. The hour which witnessed the restoration of Maddalena, was not more gratefully remembered than the season of calmer reflection, in which he deliberately renewed his trust in God, and his hope of immortality. With him, religious truths were not considered as beliefs evolved from the feelings and position of man, and having existence only as indestructible parts of human l[illegible] were viewed as distinct [illegible]

As the associations, connected with his place in society, more closely encompassed him, that vehicle of religious sentiment, which belonged to his age and country, claimed and obtained his deep respect. The creed of his fellow-men, and of his own earliest years, was revived. The history of those traditions and miracles, which had conveyed to him the most varied impressions, according to the various views he had entertained of the substance of the religion they supported, was again endowed with its sacred and authoritative character. Christianity was this time received with better auspices: its hopes were more permanently retained, and its precepts more correctly interpreted, now that they were combined with the active purposes and cheerful affections of the present scene of existence. The light from Heaven was illuminating and blending with the home of his terrestrial happiness. As a morbid, gloomy, and misanthropic passion had first carried him away from this faith, so a contented, hopeful, and social frame of mind had brought him back to it. The humane and benevolent affections co-operated with reason, and guided his imagination. These, indeed, are the abiding oracles of our wisdom; these are the true and eternal Mu[illegible]

Let i[illegible] [illegible]hat, in this description, we have [illegible] [illegible]n too intimately

with matters of belief. The most sublime, the most essential, the most irresistible of all doctrines,—the existence of an intellectual Creator of the universe, —needs the support of other faculties than reason. The many learned treatises, which daily appear to elucidate and confirm what is termed the argument from design, would prove as feeble and ineffectual as they are felt to be strong and convincing, were they restricted in their appeal to a passionless and unimaginative intellect.

We should be doing violence to our own feelings, and placing ourselves in a false position to the reader, were we to enter into a cold and captious criticism of this popular argument. We most briefly suggest, that the appearance of contrivance denotes the *act* of contrivance, not of creation. Our notion of adaptation vanishes, when we add to it the power to originate. So that the argument infers a God *in* nature—not *above*. Again: the same experience which teaches us to connect the marks of design with a previous operation of thought, obliges us, with equal force, to associate such thought with a pre-existing order of things. Thus, also, we are referred to an intellect operating *in* nature. How far this solves the problem of creation, or answers the demands of religion, we need not say.*

* These remai[illegible] [illegible]nded

It is true, that the first and simplest *laws* of nature present themselves as *ideas*. But is this, it will still be asked, because they are ideas *with us?*

In such questions, a reason, unsupported by the common feelings of our nature, and by those associations of thought which such feelings have generated or maintained, might probably oscillate for ever. But, indeed, it is not as a doctrine, explanatory of the world's creation, that the belief of a divine existence holds the place it does in the mind of man. We claim a *humanised* causation. Our transiency seeks support on an eternal mind; our ignorance refers us to an omniscient, our weakness brings us to a sympathising power; our fears implore, our hopes solicit, a beneficence that is beyond the circle, and superior to the dominion of nature. We may cavil, but we *must* believe; the heart demands it, and reason allows, if she could not compel. Do we wish, by this, to enfeeble the proof of a divine existence? We could not live a day, an hour, without this faith. We desire only

upon the general notion entertained of the relation between mind and the material world, as being distinct in its essence, but dependent for its knowledge. And this notion is most favourable to the argument. The scheme of metaphysics, which ascribes the origin of all our knowledge to the mind itself,—which considers time and [illegible] having no existence, but as modes of thought [illegible] do great honour to the human mind [illegible] smogony.

to point out the indissoluble union, the harmony, and necessary co-operation of the several faculties of the human mind,—of the reason, the feelings, and the imagination. We honour this compounded and complicate condition of humanity. Is it for nothing, that we are imaginative beings? that we must for ever carry forth the feelings of a known world into the region of the unknown? He, who would deny to his affections all influence on his belief, must either pronounce (and this is frequent and harmless,) that to be the pure result of ratiocination, to which other operations of the mind have greatly contributed; or, in the almost suicidal attempt to separate himself entirely from the control of feeling, he must unsocialise his reason, deprive himself of some of the greatest sources of human felicity, and lose, it may be, the needful guidance and *restraint* of those very passions which he so contemptuously estimated.

We have been asserting the necessary union of reason, feeling, and imagination. Do we wish, therefore, that men should believe what their reason does not convince them of? By no means. Do we wish that, in any system of education, doctrines should be taught to cultivate and direct the imagination, which they who teach do not believe? By no means. T ... cal end do we assert th ... ever.

There is no fear that this union will be dissolved. We are displaying a matter of abstract science: we are not delivering a precept.

Of the other personages of our story we believe we have little to relate. Francesco might still have been seen lounging in the public walks of Genoa with that indolence of temper, which, if it sometimes exposes to the attacks of ennui, effectually prevents that disorder from assuming any very formidable shape.

What were the emotions felt, or what the vicissitudes encountered by the poet in his expedition to the newly discovered continent of America, we are unable to record. We can only follow him in imagination on his voyage across the Atlantic, beloved as the captain of a crew with whom his very superiority of mental cultivation gave him freedom of intercourse, while it preserved him, without effort, from any familiarity destructive of command. We can picture him to ourselves retiring from the duties of the ship, or from a frank and cheerful conversation with his men, to walk the deck apart, or lean, remote from all, against the side of his vessel. At these times he must have felt h[illegible] [illegible]lf separated him from his surro[illegible] [illegible] have found himself

in a solitude as complete as if he only were traversing those vast and illimitable waters. The grand and endless problems of human reason, heightened in their import by that sublimity of material nature, which they, in the first instance, so greatly aid in originating, must not only have occupied his mind, but have appeared to rest on him *alone*—to be the peculiar and solemn portion of his transient and separated spirit.

That, after many years, he returned, an uncompanied man, in shattered health and broken fortune, to his native country, is all that is known of his career. It pleased him that he should spend his last hours, and take up his last rest in his own Italy. Yet, it was the latest and only request of Cynthio that no tombstone or monumental tablet should mark the place of his interment. His name had been inglorious. He did not care that it should be graven above him with its needless and disregarded history of birth and death. Thus, his early passion for poetic fame still betrayed its existence—a passion which adds all the caprices of love to the obstinacy of ambition. This fanciful request was complied with, and the place of his oblivious repose is now forgotten. His dying couch was watched over by no friend or relative who would have acted on this [illegible] with affectionate disobedience [illegible] his

habits of thought had made and kept him a solitary man. Perhaps there may yet exist in the Italian language some pieces of anonymous authorship which have owed their origin to Cynthio. His voice, though not his name, may have survived him; his genius may have won an immortality which fortune only may have refused to acknowledge.

One parting glance at our hero, *imparadised in the common-place of human life*. Several years have elapsed since the marriage of Ernesto. He is no longer the wealthy nobleman, nor has this reverse in his fortune occasioned to himself or Maddalena a single regret. The transformation which the palace and its pleasure-grounds exhibits, resembles those which the wand of harlequin is so celebrated for producing. The Gothic chapel, left standing by itself, and surrounded by an iron railing, is bestowed on one of the religious orders, and employed by them for the purposes of public devotion. The central and castellated part of the building, with its gloomy archway, and ever-suspended portcullis, has entirely disappeared. The remaining wing forms a not inelegant structure, and supplies them with more than ample residence. The paved court has been converted into a garden; the g[illegible]vated as a farm. The plough-sh[illegible]-yard; its lawns a[illegible]

laid together into pasture ground; and sheep are drinking at such of its artificial fountains as have escaped destruction. The battlemented wall, which separated the building from the city, and which threw its shadow over so large a space of ground, is shorn of half its height, and made to support the peaceful growth of many a well-tended fruit-tree.

Ernesto is busy, spade in hand, digging, but for what purpose we cannot plainly discover. A little girl, crouched down at his side, is groping with a short stick amongst the earth which her father is throwing out. Behind him, on a rustic bench, is spread an open volume, with a small axe lying across its pages, to prevent them from being turned over by the wind. It is one of Martin Luther's folios. Maddalena is sitting at the side of it, and, bending over, looks at the book which her husband has been reading. The volume itself, however, seems to interest her little, for though she reads above, and below the axe she cares not to remove it from the place it occupies in the centre of the page. Confiding in the goodness of God and of the Virgin, she reads without anxiety.

On a sudden the little girl, at the feet of Ernesto, who has from time to time been muttering her unheeded expressions of wonder, bursts into a loud cry of delight and astonishme[illegible] pauses from his task to take [illegible] re.

Maddalena approaches, and leaning her hand upon his shoulder, looks down also into that heap of mould with which both he and the child are now busily engaged. The soil he has been throwing out is found to be filled with a number of gold coins, precious stones, and other articles of great value, mingled also with useless pieces of metal, and knacks of the most trivial description. At length Ernesto is reminded that he has been digging on the spot where the grotto of the idiot had stood. "They are mine!—mine!" cries the little one, and the claims of the first discoverer are readily admitted. "But how came they here?" is the question of Maddalena. "They are the gift," was the reply of Piccolomente, the idiot, a good friend of mine, who saved that life which another has rendered peaceful and content,—a life which I was ever ready to cast away,—which was filled with pain, and doubt, and contradiction, till I found with thee, my Maddalena, both happiness and truth!".

NOTES.

"*She sees, as Apuleius tells us,*" p. 72.

The passage in the wild, luxuriant, but pictorial language of the original runs thus:—

"Sed cum primum luminis oblatione tori secreta claruerunt, videt omnium ferarum mitissimam dulcissimamque bestiam, ipsum illum Cupidinem formosum Deum formose cubantem..... Videt capitis aurei genialem cæsariem ambrosia temulentam, cervices lacteas, genasque purpureas pererrantes crinium globos, decoriter impeditos, alios antependulos, alios retropendulos. Per humeros volatilis Dei pinnæ roscidæ micanti flore candicant, et quamvis [illegible] quescentibus, estimæ plumulæ tenellæ ac delicatæ, tremule resultantes, inquieta lasciviunt."

And thus he describes the ascent of Venus in that car —"limæ tenuantis detrimento conspicuum, et ipsius auri damno pretiosum. De multis quæ circa cubiculum dominæ stabulant, procedunt quatuor candidæ columbæ, et hilares incessibus picta colla torquentes, jugum gemmeum subeunt; susceptaque domina lætæ subvolant. Currum Deæ prosequentes gannitu constrepenti lasciviunt passeres [illegible] quæ dulce canticant aves milleis mod[illegible] adventum Deæ prænuntiant.

Cædunt nubes, et cœlum filiæ panditur et summus æther cum gaudio suscipit Deam."

"*Allegory is a mode of instruction so devised, that it never teaches anything that was not better known before.*" p. 75.

We have somewhere read, that an allegory might be defined as a longer fable; but the two should be distinguished. The fable is a supposed instance of conduct, admitting of frequent and apt application to the affairs of life. If brute beasts and inanimate objects, if foxes, and dogs, and trees have discourse of reason, we must still believe them, in spite of these miraculous properties, to be no other than foxes, dogs, and trees. The allegory, on the contrary, conveys a general truth, and the personages which figure in its narrative are the terms of an abstract proposition. Thus Sir Guyon, in his silver panoply, is not only a knight, but the virtue of temperance; and the horrid wood round the cave of despair, with its maze of path, and its deadliness of shade is an expression for the intricacies of error. Its fiction is least capable of teaching by example, for the action must be subservient to the general truth it has to express,—a truth which must, at the same time, have been previously known in its didactic form, or the allegory cannot be understood.

Whatever interest the "dark conceit" may communicate to the narrative, the narrative can add little force to a general proposition with which it is arbitrarily connected. The plot of a story cannot elucidate the difficulties of an argument; and the distresses of a h[illegible] very little in the dilemmas of logic [illegible]

By taking notice of this distinction between fable and allegory, we shall discern one great reason of that peculiar interest, which has been justly attributed to the rude workmanship of the "Pilgrim's Progress." This is only in part an allegory. The slough of despond is the feeling of despondency; but Christian is no allegorical representation of religion. He is plain John Bunyan, or any other good man, who has to undergo the like trials. We are never under the necessity of transforming the hero into some cold abstraction. He thus engages our sympathy, and his history carries with it throughout the force of example.

"*Perhaps the co-existence of both these modes of thinking, as it is most likly to prevail, so also is it, on the whole, the most beneficial.*" p. 105.

The question whether certain states of the mind be original or compounded, attends the metaphysical student through the whole course of his inquiries; and in this instance, as other causes than the mere difficulty of the analysis interfere to perplex the discussion, it is one to which we cannot expect a very speedy conclusion.

The manner in which the moral sentiments may be derived from more simple elements of thought, has been admirably stated in *Mill's Analysis of the Human Mind.* This writer has, indeed, carried his analysis to the extreme. If any one, captivated by the very lucid style of the book, and deceived by the artifice of passing over much which pertains to the acquisition of knowledge under the h[illegible] "naming," has advanced to its conclus[illegible] le of the author, we only request h[illegible] ook into his crucible,

and endeavour to reconstruct the mind out of those elements which his analysis has left him. Sensations—remembrances of these sensations—associations of these remembrances—here are all his materials! He cannot even obtain from them the idea of space or outwardness. It is in vain that *he* would introduce the will to assist in forming the distinction between a *self* and a *not-self*, for what is will, in his system, but a name for the association of one sensation, or the remembrance of a sensation, with another sensation, namely the muscular?

But though we think that our countryman has gone into one extreme, we are not disposed to run into the other, and throwing away many a beautiful analysis and many an *applicable* result, partake ourselves to systems which seem to delight in their multitude of original forms and powers obstinately primitive.—But where we should wish to place ourselves between the two extremes would require a volume, not a note, to explain.

"*How can morality be perfected while the same being is both to judge and to* be *judged?*" p. 245.

It is the inevitable division thus created in public opinion, which (speaking apart from its peculiar claims) renders necessary the supplemental aid of the religious sentiment. This, attaching itself, from time to time, to the best and most general conclusions of morality, enforces them alike upon all, and so *tends to universalise* the moral rule. The opinion of society, echoed from the sky, sounds as one voice. Neither is this repre[illegible] of the case materially affected by the circ[illegible] ious teacher appeals to [illegible] is

variously interpreted, and its purity is of no avail unless the age can understand and appreciate it.

—"*The people's church, a structure which Time may be said rather to alter than to destroy.*" p. 252.

Thus, in our own country, if the "voluntary principle" should ultimately prevail, there would still be a popular church. Episcopacy would only have yielded to Congregationalism.

Whether this change would be beneficial or not to our system of manners, we should be departing widely from that tone of extreme generalization which we have adopted, if we were to give an opinion. Throughout the volume no reference whatever is intended to the politics of our own times. The politics (if such they may be called) of Cornelius are introduced only as the best means of eliciting certain general truths relative to human society.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY STEWART AND CO.

OLD BAILEY.


P109